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P. 12



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EDITORIAL

Is it blasphemy to build a "modern" church?

THERE IS A SIGNIFICANT LINK between the bizarre buildings of the South Bank Exhibition in London—now in its last weeks—and the choice of a design for the new Coventry Cathedral which makes a startling break with tradition.

Both are influenced by the ideas of "constructive modernists."

In architecture, their main argument is simply this—that new materials and methods call for new designs in building. Metal and glass and plastics, plus engineering skill, have removed most of the normal limitations that have governed the construction of building of all types in the past—such as having to support a roof upon four stone walls. To the modernists, the revolutionary ideas which can now be expressed in the form of buildings are both thrilling and beautiful.

They cannot carry everybody with them all at once. We have a preference for our familiar buildings which is partly sentimental, but is also firmly founded on a respect for tradition. We cannot be expected to throw that overboard and there is no reason why we should. Tradition, too, has its merits.

But most of us will agree that the modern buildings in the Festival of Britain are gay and attractive. "Of course," we say, "they are in an exhibition. It wouldn't do to apply that sort of thing to houses and churches."

So the outcry about the award of a prize to Mr. Basil Spence's design for the rebuilding of Coventry Cathedral is understandable. The design has a flat roof, with "zig-zag" walls, and uses up-to-date electrical devices. "A push-button cathedral," "Just like a super cinema," say the critics. There is sure to be a long and possibly bitter dispute before the design is finally adopted—if it is adopted—later this month.

Mr. Spence built one of the big pavilions in the South Bank Exhibition. He is a leader in what people who dislike it call "this modern stuff." His work is brilliant. But is it suitable for a project involving a great church which is also a national monument? That is the question.

Many people believe that it is a kind of blasphemy to build a church in any but the traditional way. They feel that the atmosphere of religious worship simply cannot be created in

a modernistic setting. The association of church-going with the rich and graceful Gothic evolved in the Middle Ages—and, of course, what remains of the Norman and Saxon—has existed for many hundreds of years. Why should it be broken?

Opponents of "modernism" in a cathedral say that the job of church designers is not to pioneer new architectural styles but to fulfil a sacred need in a way which will offend none and satisfy all.

Theirs is a viewpoint which should be respected even by those who disagree.

MEANWHILE, it is worth studying what is being done in other countries. The United States is building many new churches in what we are apt to call "futuristic" styles. Some of the best are skilful modern echoes of the old Gothic. They keep the high, pointed roof and the general "feeling" of the windows, while changing the details and not hesitating to use modern lighting and other devices.

Oklahoma University is to have a "Crystal Chapel" built entirely of glass triangles. Yet the designer has somehow managed to give it an ecclesiastical air. This is an extreme case, but only one of many where religious communities have decided to break with traditional design.

As war-shattered Europe begins to rebuild its public edifices, there are sure to be many startlingly modern churches among them.

Therefore most people alive today will see a considerable revolution in architecture. In time, there is little doubt, the modernists will have their way—or some of it. They always do sooner or later, or human development would stand still. And they have the new materials and methods on their side as an almost irresistible argument.

But there will be many controversies like the Coventry one. The important thing is to fight them out fairly and without prejudice. There is some beauty in all styles, both old and new. There is also a lot of rubbish. It is as absurd to denounce everything modern as it would be to denounce everything old.

Our town councils and other responsible people have two jobs. One is to preserve the treasures of the past and ensure that they are not swamped by unsuitable new neighbours. The other is to encourage modern design in the right places.



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FREE SPEECH

The kind of mother children like

HAVING JUST READ a report which said that the type of mother children love best is kind, happy and untidy, rather than smart and cross, I thought I would try the experiment on my own three children. Preparing a treat for them when they came in, I changed into the dowdiest clothes I could find. To my gratification, the treat was, for a time, overlooked amid the chorus of disapproval over the way I was dressed.

I suppose that, so far as appearance is concerned, children like the kind of mother they are used to. But if they are used to a mother who always dresses as smartly as she can, so much the better, it seems to me.—Mrs. R. K., London, N.

The Busy Registrar

AS A REGISTRAR, I find people who believe that I work only from 10-11.30 a.m. and from 2-4 p.m. Outside these hours I deal with correspondence, numerous returns and the usual office business. Marriages may take place at any time between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m., and if my office is not open some mornings until 9.45 a.m., it is because I have to attend early church weddings. Nearly every Saturday afternoon is taken up with more attendances at churches and chapels.—REGISTRAR, Yorks.

Growing Without Earth

FOLLOWING the old country custom, we stored some sweet chestnuts in a stone jar last autumn, covered them with an aluminium saucer and weighted the saucer with a tin of paint. We forgot all about them until recently, when we noticed some green shoots. The photograph shows how the chestnuts had grown until the tangled mass of shoots had lifted the saucer to find the light. There was no earth in the jar, but three of the strongest shoots have now been taken out and planted.—E. JOHN, Sylgate, 19 Yewstock Crescent West, Chippenham, Wilts.

Spotting The Islands

THE "SMALL GROUP OF ISLANDS" in Jane Armitage's story, *Distinguished Visitors* (JOHN BULL, August 4), is surely the Farnes off the Northumbrian coast, and the village Seahouses, which stands on the mainland? The Brownsmans, where the wardens stay to guard the birds on Staple Island, is certainly an isolated spot.

The islands are well known as a bird sanctuary. What, perhaps, is not so well known is that it is now possible to survey this district under expert guidance. Dr. Eric Ennion, until recently director of the famous Flatford Mill field centre, has opened a similar centre at Monk's House, Seahouses. I have just spent an enjoyable fortnight there.—LESLIE R. BAYES, honorary

secretary, Birmingham and West Midland Bird Club, 30 St. John's Avenue, Kidderminster.

Jane Armitage comments: "Mr. Bayes is correct. I have visited the Farnes many times and wrote the story with the greatest possible affection for the islands and the people of Seahouses."

More Tact Needed

SINCE BECOMING TENANTS of a council house we have been twice visited by housing inspectors. The woman who called the first time said, as I opened the door: "I'm the housing inspector. I've come to see how you keep your house"—an opening which seems unlikely to foster goodwill.

The second caller was an improvement, but still managed to be very irritating. I agree inspectors are necessary, but I suggest it would make a trying job much easier and protect the public interest if inspectors handled tenants as tactfully as possible.—MRS. A. MILLER, 12 Caldwell Place, Rhu, Helensburgh, Dunbartonshire.

Daughter's Pocket Money

MY DAUGHTER, AGED FIFTEEN, has just started work, earning 41s. a week. Naturally, the possession of this sum has gone to her head and she thinks she should keep half of it. My wife points out that she has to feed and clothe her in the face of rising prices. What would be a fair and sensible sum for the girl to keep as pocket money?—F. F. H., Leicestershire.

Marking Their Men

NUMBERED CRICKETERS, as once suggested by one of your readers ("Free Speech," June 2), have just made their first appearance in Edinburgh. It certainly helps spectators to identify



Hibernians take the field

players more easily. The new fashion was not started by a cricket club, but by a team put out by Hibernian Football Club to play a friendly match against one of Edinburgh's leading cricket clubs. Incidentally, the footballers won.—JOHN D. MCGOVERN, 15 Coltbridge Avenue, Edinburgh, 12.

Safety For Cyclists

YOUR EDITORIAL on road safety (JOHN BULL, August 11) which said that cyclists' organizations resist any attempt to impose a measure of road discipline which might help to save the lives of their members, was incorrect and unfair to the National Cyclists' Union.

The N.C.U. publishes numerous leaflets on road safety, advising on brakes, road conduct, etc. It advises members never to ride more than two abreast and then only if traffic conditions permit. It gives definite instructions on road signals. It has a committee of

experts which works throughout the year to reduce accidents, is represented on the Royal Society for Prevention of Accidents and on all essential Government committees. Many of its twenty-nine centres in Britain are represented on local road safety committees.

Although not agreeing with every so-called safety measure brought forward, the N.C.U. is a law-abiding organization.—A. P. CHAMBERLIN, secretary, National Cyclists' Union, London, W.C.1.

The Smarter Sex

WHY IS IT THAT English women look so poorly dressed compared with women of other nations? A French or American woman never wears a scarf over her head or low-heeled shoes with a summer frock. English women have been told so often that they can do a man's job that they have given up trying to look feminine. Men are more particular about the way they dress than women.—D. T. TAPSELL, 6 Belbrook Grove, Wesley Castle, Birmingham, 29.

Tip For Walkers

THERE MIGHT BE LESS NEED for your Treader's suggestion of a Highway Code for pedestrians ("Free Speech," August 4) if everyone followed my



golden rule: never look an approaching pedestrian straight in the eye, or you are pretty sure to perform a step dance in front of each other.—C. S., Wakefield.

A Collar Goes Through It

HOW MANY PEOPLE realize the processes a collar goes through at the laundry? It is marked and filed, soaked, washed in a machine, put through a hot lime wash, then a blue wash, starched, straightened, cleaned of excess starch, dried, dampened, rolled, ironed, sorted and packed.—R. C., Glamorgan.

One Way To Get A House

LIKE MANY THOUSANDS of other young unmarried people, we had no prospect of possessing our own home—until we heard of the Small Dwellings Acquisition Act and borrowed the money through our local council to buy a house. Now we are in the happy position of having to pay in mortgage only that amount which is required from council tenants. We got to know of the Act through the JOHN BULL Free Advice Service.—HAROLD WALKER, 67 Lidgett Lane, Dinnington, Sheffield.

Letters intended for publication should be marked "Free Speech" and include the sender's full name and address. John Bull pays a guinea for every letter printed. Readers with personal problems should send inquiries (other than medical) to John Bull Free Advice Service with a stamped, addressed envelope for reply.

THIS WEEK'S COVER

A. R. THOMSON, R.A., a six-footer who likes to be mistaken for a city type, bears no resemblance to the artist on his cover painting—but the incident there is true. The culprits were three little boys in a flat opposite his Chelsea home. Bored with convalescing from measles, they decided to plague Thomson with the old mirror trick—and gave him a bright idea for his cover picture.





Dynamic BETTY GRABLE, soon to be seen in 20th Century-Fox's "Meet Me After the Show," always uses Lux Toilet Soap.

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my complexion
secret" says**

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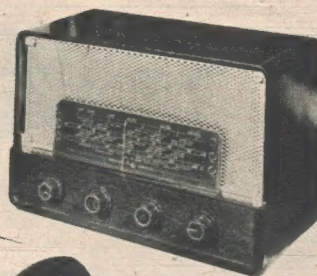


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The boy stood close, breathing hard. Jundy stared at him intently. Without taking his eyes off the boy's face, he said: "What's your name?"

RED FINGERS

by HUGH FALKUS

ILLUSTRATED BY GEORGE DITTON

He was slim, fair-haired, a shy, dreamy youngster—just like another boy Jundy had known, a boy who had died long ago . . .

JUNDY STOPPED HIS CAR IN the shade outside Dimmy Crabb's pub. He sat for a while smoking, and looking out across the miles of salt marsh and mudflats that stretched almost to the skyline, where a dark-blue streak of sea merged with the sky in a dancing haze.

From the estuary, Thursday creek curled like a silver tentacle into the grey-brown marshes, losing itself eventually behind a green ribbon of sea wall that wound and twisted along the landward side of the saltings. On the end of a sandspit near the mouth of the creek, the round, black, gull-whitened top of Thursday Beacon stood, slightly bent, on its squat, rusty iron legs, an ageing Martian monster, drowsing in the warmth of a summer sun.

Nothing seemed to have changed much.

Jundy flipped his cigarette butt out of the open window, and stepped from the car on to the cobbled ground in front of the pub. He

looked across its weather-beaten façade to the hanging sign—a once-black crow on a background of faded green. That it was some sort of bird was just recognizable. It hadn't been repainted for a long time. It looked, Jundy reflected, just the same as it had done seventeen years before, when he had seen it last.

He pushed open the door to the bar and stepped inside, ducking his head under the low frame. It was cool and dark in the long, stone-flagged room with its head-high rafters and small lace-curtained windows. He stood for a moment, blinking, while his eyes, part blinded by the bright sunlight outside, became accustomed to the semi-gloom.

There was the same old brick fireplace with its iron-cradled grate; the empty pipe-rack and the smoke-blackened prints on the wall; the stuffed pike inside its dusty glass case, with the yellowing card giving its weight and place of capture. There was the same worm-eaten

wooden bench by the bar where Puggy Marvel would sit on long winter nights recounting his day's adventures along sea wall and tide edge, looking for "dead-uns," the corpses of drowned men, brought into the creeks by an eddy from the tide-rip off Thursday point; he would report each "find" to the police constable at Middle Branley village for the standard rate of five shillings a head.

Jundy smiled, and went over to the bar. He leaned across and called through the half-opened door of the passage leading to the parlour.

"There was a moment of silence. A bluebottle buzzed behind one of the lace curtains. Then came the shuffled footsteps of Dimmy Crabb. He wandered behind the bar, peering short-sightedly, his sparse chin whiskers and wisp of grey hair fluffed out like a faded halo round his white face.

Dimmy hadn't changed much, either. Perhaps

Continued on page 26

I meet a gangster boss and an army of girl soldiers

HARRY HOPKINS, touring Far East danger spots, sends his second report on Indo-China—where dragon, cross, running wheel, lotus and snarling tiger battle to forge a new nation

SAIGON

THE CHIEF OF STAFF looked about twenty, but he was, he told me, forty. He had spent a good many of those years in the French Army. He had fought for the Viet-Minh. Now he wore insignia I had not seen till now: a small round badge with three red concentric circles in his cap; at his breast pocket, French style, a shield with a writhing dragon. There is a legend that the Viet-Nameese are descended from a dragon.

At Hué, the walled Imperial city, the capital of Central Viet-Nam, the plain narrows to a coastal strip. As we sped along the road—the old "Mandarin Way" that goes swinging out like a sickle lying along the great bulge of Indo-China—the mountains rose, a continuous dark

blue jagged frieze on our right, a wild, unexplored land: the land of the Viet-Minh.

At the military hospital the chief of Health Services was standing in the middle of the garden, still in his white surgical cap and gown, directing the sinking of a well. "There is too much waiting for American aid, waiting for French aid," said Dr. Dan. "We must work. We must rely on ourselves."

This young doctor was certainly doing that. He showed us round the hospital, the laboratory with its one microscope, the dental room, the operating theatre, the dispensary, the refrigerator with its vaccines and cultures, the garden to produce their vegetables. "If I had more money . . ." he sighed. "But in a few more months it will be better. I have only begun. . ."

A couple of months earlier he had been back in the mountains on the other side of the road—the medical chief of a Viet-Minh division with eighteen doctors under him. Why had he come over? He smiled ruefully. "Because I did not like Communism. People were being forced. . . ." He introduced the hospital doctor, not long ago a Viet-Minh prisoner, who had now also crossed the road. And now four other Viet-Minh doctors were coming over.

An Army Of "Converts"

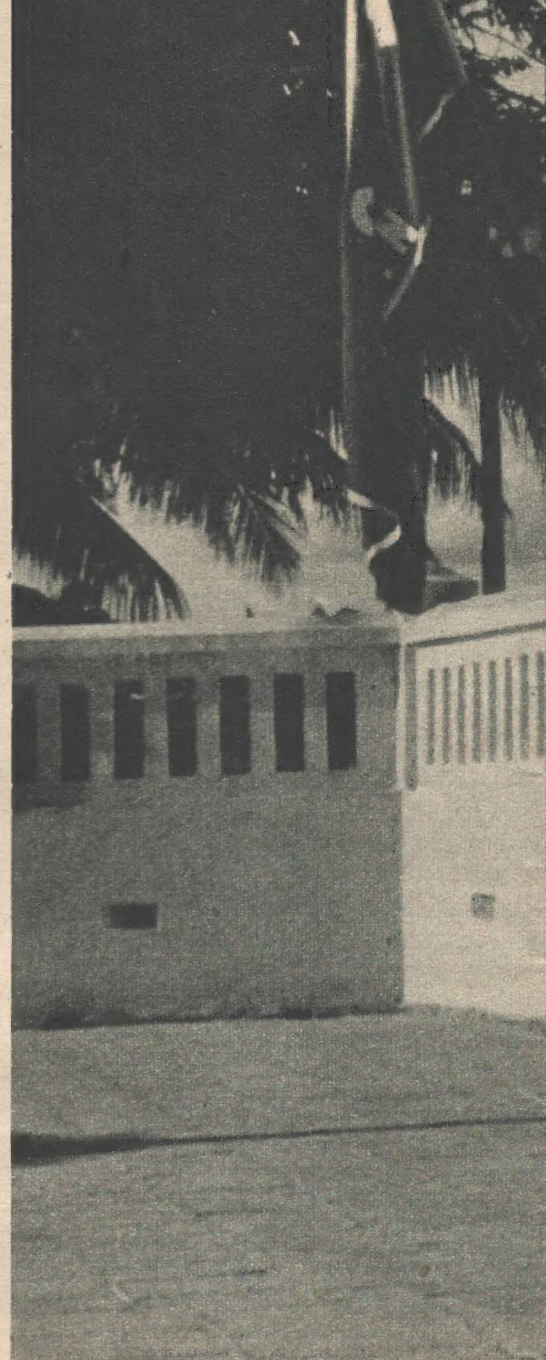
In fact, the army of Central Viet-Nam is full of "converted" Viet-Minh, and that he should have succeeded in this—the essential key to the whole Indo-China imbroglio—is the most powerful argument of Governor Pham van Giao, who for three years has been building, and fighting for, an army that would be Viet-Namian from top to bottom with never a Frenchman in sight. For, argues Giao, while all sides agree that the hard core of Communists in Viet-Minh are only a minority, the Nationalists with them will never rally to Viet-Nam as long as that means they will return to serve again under the very Frenchmen they went to the hills to fight.

The Governor—a lithe and lively fifty who still rides a bicycle and plays tennis—received me in the beautiful palace he has just built for himself beside Hué's famous "River of Perfumes." An ex-pharmacist, for many years a representative in the nominated prewar Assembly, leader of the youth movement started by the Vichy Government during the war, he was jailed by the Viet-Minh as a crony of the Emperor Bao Dai, argued his way out from a Viet-Minh tribunal and forthwith went off to Hongkong to bring back Bao Dai.

There can be various opinions about the integrity of Pham van Giao and the exact



Colonel Le Van Vien, gangster and soldier of fortune. The boss of Saigon's gambling dens and the crony of cabinet ministers, he guards the capital with his private army of 3,000 men



Women warriors of the army of Hoa-Hao.

nature of the game he is playing, but there can be no doubt at all that he is one of the very few high-ups in the present Viet-Nam Government who display any vestige of independence or genuine nationalism or the sort of vigour and faith from which new nations are built. Today his "V.B.D."—nominally the Civil Guard of Central Viet-Nam—is a self-contained army of 13,000 men, Viet-Nameese from top to bottom, which has taken over from the French the patrolling and holding of the central sector.

Said Colonel Le, the V.B.D.'s tough-spirited little chief: "Three years ago I had nothing. We still lack much. But there is one thing we do not lack: morale."

It was true. These Viet-Nameese soldiers held up their heads and wore their uniforms with an air I had not found in the French-dominated north. And when they showed you around they glowed with proprietary pride. In the n.c.o.s' school, each barrack hut had a name. The one I went in was called "Effort."

Even in the camp for the Re-education of Viet-Minh Prisoners I found the same enthusiasm—the enthusiasm of youth. At the gate several prisoner-gardeners were tending a flower border. "Country Not Party," spelled out the red flowers. In a series of open-sided sheds men were working industriously at sewing machines making uniforms, at a forge making tools, at carpenters' benches making furniture.

Outside, women were carrying crushed stone to make concrete blocks, among them a young girl, pretty and tall for a Viet-Nameese, in that elegant, fluttering white dress of theirs. She took off her conical straw hat as we passed. About eighty of the camp's prisoners, I was



They are armed with pikes and curved Japanese swords. After taking this picture, Hopkins watched them give an exhibition of Viet-Name boxing

told, were women. Mostly, said the director, they were just spies. The Viet-Minh used women to frequent Viet-Nam posts, demoralize their leaders and bring back information.

In the camp quadrangle behind was the lecture hall, the lock-up with a hundred new prisoners, waiting investigation by the Second Bureau, the maternity ward with an alphabet painted up on the walls—for many women were still illiterate—and, in the centre of the space, the flag-pole where the whole camp assembled at seven each morning for the hoisting of the Viet-Nam colours. In massive white letters a slogan ran across the roof of the hut that closed the quadrangle: "WHEN YOU COME OUT OF THIS CAMP YOU WILL THEN BE MODEL CITIZENS."

French Not Impressed

But nationalist enthusiasm has little place in French military textbooks. The French profess themselves quite unimpressed by the all-Viet-Name Army of Governor Giao. It is not, they regret very much, efficient. Its officers are not properly trained. Replies Colonel Le: "To fight the Viet-Minh you do not need to have been to a tactical school. Who are the Viet-Minh? The Viet-Minh were our comrades. We know them. We can make war on them. We must work with the population, the people of the villages. They are our parents, our brothers, our cousins. They will help us. . . ."

And so beneath the enthusiasm of the young officers of Central Viet-Nam there is an undercurrent of bitterness, of sad cynical despair. "The future?" said one young lieutenant. "I think the war will last a very long time. The Viet-Minh are stronger than us, they are well

organized, their leaders are men who will die before they will surrender. And they have unity—with us it is each to his corner."

The Viet-Name forces could have unity, too. But they believe it would be a French unity. They just do not believe—any of them, anywhere—that France would tolerate a strong, unified independent Viet-Nam Army.

Distrust is absolute. In a Hué transport office I talked with a young Viet-Name clerk. He came from Vinh—the native district of Ho-Chi-Minh, the Viet-Minh leader, and today his stronghold. The clerk had left in a hurry—he, too, did not care for Communism. But he liked what he had little more.

He took a bill and slowly traced on the back of it a faltering circle. "Do you know what that is?" he said, sadly, to the Englishman who would never understand. "It is *le cercle vicieux*—the vicious circle. We have a war against Communism, so we have the French Army. We have the French Army, so we cannot be independent. We are not independent, therefore we must have the French Army. . . ."

It is a vicious circle which threatens the stability of all South-East Asia. And it could have been broken without too much difficulty at any time in the last five years. For the Viet-Name are not anti-French. Far from it—the French have sold them their way of life with striking success. Said the ex-Viet-Minh doctor, who finished in Paris: "We are not the enemies of the French. We like the French. But they must not treat us as *enfants*. . . . We want them as equals and friends—but not as masters."

That, unfortunately—by some oddity perhaps of national psychology—is a state of mind

which the French seem totally incapable of understanding or at least of accommodating themselves to.

Foreign correspondents are earnestly assured that France is losing money heavily in Indo-China, that it is costing her more than she gets from America under Marshall Aid, that she has nothing to stay for, that very soon if the Viet-Namians don't play up she will positively *insist* on leaving them. Newspapers and stooge politicians protest six times a day that now Viet-Nam is truly, *truly* independent—within the French Union, of course.

Reality Behind Façade

But nobody believes it. For there are other incidents—so many of them—which do not go into the papers. You cannot be in this country a week without realizing that if the child has been given the latch-key, mother is, nevertheless, without fail waiting behind the door.

There was a ceremony and *discours* recently to commemorate the transfer of police and internal security services. A few weeks ago in Dalat a French Sûreté lieutenant—a member of Bao Dai's bodyguard—was shot at and killed. The French Sûreté colonel went to the Viet-Name mayor of Dalat and demanded immediate reprisals—the shooting of twenty Viet-Minh prisoners, for instance. The prisoners were taken out of the jail and shot. Their bodies lay in the streets. They included women.

When this could not be hushed up and a scandal blew up the French retorted with their usual blandness that it was nothing to do with them. It was, of course, a purely Viet-Name matter. The Viet-Name, after all, were quite



Mme Le Ti Gam (left) commands girl soldiers in the Hoa-Hao Army



Multi-coloured dragons with darting, scarlet tongues, lotus blossom and enormous human eyes decorate the Great Temple of Cao-Dai-ist



The River of Perfumes at Hué, walled Imperial capital of central Viet-Nam.

independent, and the order was made by the Mayor of Dalat.

Few incidents, of course, get into the Press, which is permitted to print nothing but the official line. In the north especially, Viet-Nameese editorials are full of rows of little dots—to leave a blank space is forbidden. Why? I asked one of the most moderate of editors. "What did you say there?" He told me. It was the mildest of sentiments. Why, then? "*Parce qu'il ne plait pas*"—Because it didn't please.

"But the censor, of course, he's a Viet-Nameese?"

"Yes, but there's a Frenchman, too—but the Frenchman is hidden."

"The Coolie Mentality"

And yet, on paper, what the French say is perfectly true. The various departments of government have been progressively turned over. French officials have been largely withdrawn.

Why then these miserable frustrations, this nation still-born? Because, as Governor Giao observed to me, independence is not something you are given on a piece of paper. Independence is something you have to work for, something you have in your mind, *dans l'esprit*. You cannot have it if you have "the coolie mentality."

In Indo-China, as in many other countries, there exists a strong cleavage between north and south. The people of overcrowded, poverty-stricken Tonkin are industrious, nationalistic, fiercely wedded to their native soil. They have provided most of the nation's leading intellectuals, nearly all its nationalist leaders. But down in the south, in the old French colony of Cochinchina, life is easier and the people are more easygoing, more sophisticated, their wealthier classes more than half French in outlook. It is thus no coincidence that the Ministers of the first "independent" government of Viet-Nam are nearly all Cochinchinese, mostly former French functionaries, often also French citizens.

Consider, for instance, the king-pin, M. le President du Conseil, His Excellency M. Tran Van Huu. Tran Van Huu has come a long way since, fifty years or so ago, he started out in a famous French Saigon Lycée, graduated as an agricultural engineer in Tunis and joined the French colonial service. Today he is perhaps best described as a financier. He has interests in numerous powerful French Indo-China companies. He is a large rice landowner. And he came into more land—and wealth—through his marriage to a rich wife. Today he is generally tagged as "the richest man in Indo-China."

His Excellency M. le President du Conseil

granted me an interview. I found a pudgy little man with grey hair behind an enormous glass-covered desk. He watched me guardedly, waiting for me to begin, looking for some clue to my attitude. The desk was so enormous and his voice so quiet and uninterested that I had to lean forward to catch what he said. But everything, I gathered, was progressing well. The next major step? Well, if the Chinese didn't give trouble and everything went well, the French Army would go. After all, France had a third of her forces in Indo-China and she wanted them back in Europe.

Doubts of independence? I had found the nationalists' suspicious? "Those men," said Tran Van Huu, and his voice rose for a moment, "those men are afraid. They have committed treason against Ho-Chi-Minh. And now they are afraid to join us. . . . They are afraid!"

The photographs on the hoardings and in the information halls are very large. The French newspapers daily announce Tran Van Huu's comings and goings, print his picture—generally at the side of General de Lattre—give his speeches by the yard. It is just unfortunate that no one has any real respect for M. Tran Van Huu. He had the greatest difficulty in forming a Cabinet. Even the French now probably regret their creation. But the photographs are very large. And in any case there is just nobody else to take the job.

City Of Two Faces

Lacking all popular support, the Tran Van Huu government has collected an extraordinary rag-bag of backers, from freak religious minorities to gangsters and soldiers of fortune on the make. Some of it falls most easily into the metaphor of Kansas City or Chicago.

For Saigon is a city with two faces. Five miles from the smart tree-lined boulevards of Saigon—a newer, brighter, younger Paris—begins the chaotic sprawl of Cholon, the Chinese city. Cholon is Saigon's other face, the Mr. Hyde to her Dr. Jekyll, feverishly dedicated to the pursuit of money and sensation.

When night falls and the shutters go up in the "rue de la Paix" of Saigon, down the broad Boulevard Gallieni that leads out towards Cholon sweep the open taxis crammed with young people, the big shining private cars, the blue buses, the clanging trams, the madly buzzing motor-poushes which carry their passengers—exhilaratingly but alarmingly—enthroned before their speeding wheels.

Swelling the nightly tide, the people weave their way through the Chinese-organized chaos

of eats-stalls and hawkers and hole-in-the-wall shops, wander on, like souls in purgatory, through the teeming streets suffused with the pungent odours of dried fish and crackling pork, the sickly sweet smell of durians, past the immense multi-storeyed balconied Chinese restaurants, alight like galleons in the dimness, past the cabarets and taxi-dance halls and brothels and gaming houses and opium dives, until, perhaps, they arrive at the Grande Monde.

Buying A Slice Of Hope

Watch them pouring in through the high ornate wooden porticos, festooned with lights, frisked as they pass by the guards for hidden guns or cameras, crowding round the tables where Chinese girl croupiers sing out the numbers in hard, shrill voices, flick out the folded notes on to the tables from the big bundles under their hand. A wrinkled old coolie fumbles in his shirt, untwists five piastres and puts them on Number 7. The table fills up with notes. The Chinese girl behind the table sings out her incantations. Another girl walks over to a closed room, puts in a hand, brings out a roll. She advances to the centre of the space behind the table, sings out like a well-trained cockatoo, presses a catch and lets the roll fall open. Number 6 is revealed. The old coolie's five piastres are swept over the table.

The game is Dê—the most popular because it offers the biggest, wildest slice of hope at the lowest cost. But next door, across a litter of café tables, a roulette wheel is spinning, the pivot of a hundred eyes. For here is one of the biggest gambling dens in the East. It yields to the Government in betting tax 600,000 piastres a night. Legally, £1 buys fifty-eight piastres, or eighty in the black market.

But Cholon has another importance. It is the gateway to Saigon, the exposed flank of the capital. The Viet-Minh could have no happier hunting-ground. Yet today Saigon-Cholon is quiet. For the gateway has been taken care of.

Everybody in Saigon-Cholon has heard of Colonel Le Van Vien. My taxi-driver's recognition was striking. We tried his various villas. Silent young men, lean and sombre, came out from nowhere and grimly regarded us. Finally we ran the colonel to earth in his headquarters in a dismal no-man's-land across the river. I was led past the white-helmeted sentry, through a huddle of straw-roofed huts, past saw-milling sheds and across a field. I found the colonel drinking tea in the officers' mess in front of his office, a strongly built, chunky man, tall for a Viet-Nameese, with bored unhappy eyes that



Harry Hopkins took this picture from Governor Giao's beautiful new palace beside the river



Once a peasant, Tran van Soai is now a general who looks like an Oriental Foch



Cao-Dai-ist Pope Pham-Cong-Tac poses with Harry Hopkins. He has two million adherents

glanced everywhere but never for more than a moment at you.

They were the eyes of much experience. For the colonel has had an unconventional career. Before the war, his aides will tell you, he was "independent"—boss of one of Cholon's toughest gangs, uncrowned king of this turbulent cross-river district of workshops, ricefields and abattoirs. He was, some say, the better type of bandit, taking from the rich and giving to the poor.

Today Le Van Vien still holds sway in his old domain. But there have been changes. For today he is a colonel—a prop of the régime and a crony of cabinet ministers—and today he heads a two-battalion army, the famous Army of Binh Xuyen, whose 3,000 soldiers wear on their uniforms the snarling tiger badge, with the letters "B.X."—for Binh Xuyen, the scene of the colonel's first struggles for self-expression.

The colonel speaks little French, so, the political adviser being absent in France, the conversation was conducted through the military adviser. Since the colonel is not by nature loquacious the military adviser also filled in the gaps. The colonel, I learned, first won his spurs fighting for the Viet-Minh in the earlier years of the war; then, when they sought to curb his independence, he crossed over to offer his services to the French. Now his mission was to protect the vital eastern bank of the river, manning a hinterland network of posts, divided into eight sectors, each in the charge of a company.

"Concession" Pays The Troops

But, complained the military adviser, despite these manifold services in the war against Communism, when it came to the share-out of U.S. military aid, the colonel was passed by. Even the Government of Viet-Nam gave him nothing.

Who, then, paid the Army of Binh Xuyen?

Who, of course, but the colonel. For the colonel was nothing if not adaptable. In addition to being the commander of an army, he was manager of the Grande Monde—a concession conferred upon him by His Majesty Bao Dai in order to "nourish his troops." Saigon—which is well accustomed to an ample diet of financial scandal—has long buzzed with rumours that the Grande Monde's nourishment extends to more exalted political circles. A Viet-Nameese journalist rash enough to compile a file on the subject died suddenly from wounds.

The Government's other principal allies—allies of convenience—are more respectable, but hardly less extraordinary: the Cao-Dai-ists to the north, the Catholics to the east, the Hoa-Hao's

to the west, three organized religious minorities, three private armies, two "independent" generals, and, more modestly, a colonel.

There are two million Cao-Dai-ists (literally High-Altar-ists), followers of a twenty-five year old religion which claims to put together the best in the three great eastern religions—Buddhism, Tao-ism and Confucianism. It has a Pope and a College of Cardinals and—rather heavily veiled—a wonderful writing machine, the *corbeille à bec*, which, under suitable conditions, transmits messages from the great spirits of the past.

An Eye At Every Window

The Cao-Dai-ist "Great Temple" at Tay-Ninh, their Holy City fifty miles north of Saigon, is one of those things which just have to be seen to be believed. Multi-coloured dragons with darting scarlet tongues and fiery protruding eyes climb up and down innumerable pillars through a vast polished marble hall. Lotuses blossom in the stone grills of the windows, and from the centre of each looks out—somewhat superciliously—an enormous human eye.

I interviewed the general before dinner and the Pope before lunch. General Nguyen van Thanh was a tough little brown jumping bean of a man. He had no French and, sitting at his desk before the Cao-Dai-ist tricolour and his own personal two-star general's flag, he answered my questions in Viet-Nameese, which he spoke with great verve and much clicking of teeth.

"Like our religion," he said, "the Cao-Dai-ist Army has incorporated the best features from all other armies. I have now 50,000 soldiers—8,000 first-class soldiers with rifles whom I can use in operations, 12,000 auxiliaries trained and armed but whose command I must share with the French, and the remaining 30,000 who are fully trained but have no rifles."

He had been born, he explained, the son of a patriot, and that was why, seeking to follow in his father's footsteps, he had joined the Cao-Dai-ist ranks in 1929. Until 1940 he had concentrated on trying to be a good religious leader, but then, foreseeing a troubled future, he began to create an army—he was something like a sergeant at that time. The Japanese? Ah, they got books on strategy from the Japanese, but it was then still a secret army because, nominally at least, the French were in control of the government. (In fact the Japs, who were up to just such devilment all over South-East Asia, fostered and trained the Cao-Dai-ist Army.)

In 1945 the Cao-Dai-ist Army was fighting the Japanese, the Viet-Minh—who were massacring their communities—and the French all at the

same time. But, in 1948, as the Pope returned from wartime exile in Madagascar, in the name of the fight against Communism they threw in their lot with the French and Bao Dai.

"The Cao-Dai Army," said the general, "is a revolutionary army and a nationalistic army. Its soldiers get only 5½ piastres a day—and the highest-ranking officers only the same. Here at headquarters the officers must sleep six days every week in their offices, for the officers must share the hardships of the men. . . ."

He rose, and coming out from behind his desk, pinned on my shirt the badge of the Cao-Dai army, a design of some complexity incorporating a running wheel, a fan, a sword, and a duster—the running wheel for progress, the sword for rightness, the duster for the cleansing of the soul, the fan to bring purity to the mind.

Next morning I inspected the armament industry: a series of small thatched huts in which Cao-Dai-ist worker-soldiers—who appeared to be mostly kids of thirteen—were turning out a terrifying flow of rifles, revolvers, Sten guns, Brens, Maxims, mortars. They had a few lathes, but most of it was done, squatting on the bench, with files, hammers, hacksaws and their toes.

My Talk With The "Pope"

Then off we drove past the new radio station, past the n.c.o.s' school, the furniture factory, the temple in honour of the late Pope (which the driver smartly saluted) and the Foreign Mission, halted at the second floor for lack of funds, till we stopped before the gates of the villa "Tri-Hue-Cung"—"Bright Spirit Palace"—the modest residence of His Holiness Pham-Cong-Tac, the second Pope of Cao-Dai-ism's history.

A silent servant in a black mandarin cap seated us in an anteroom and in a few moments the Pope entered, and greeted us. He was wearing a long silk white gown, with sleeves down to his wrists, and a neat high neck, like a Victorian nightgown, and it was very soon evident that he was a man of formidable charm, a very "bright spirit" indeed, who possessed to the full that volatility of temperament and liveliness of mind which is perhaps the most endearing Viet-Nameese characteristic.

"Peace," said the Pope, "will not come from arms. Peace is something here"—and he raised two fingers delicately to the centre of his forehead—"peace is a thing of the *esprit*. When all men are men of goodwill, then peace will come. We Cao-Dai-ists are ready for union with all other churches, particularly, I hope, the Anglican Church of England. . . ." But of the

other Pope, the Pope in Rome, I gathered, he entertained little hope. . . .

The silent servant discreetly filled the porcelain teacups in their silver filigree saucers, and the Pope went on: "Man," he said, laying a gentle hand upon my arm, "lives on two planes—the spiritual and the physical. When the two planes become out of balance"—he gestured delicately—"there is much trouble in the world and there is need of a prophet to restore the equilibrium. Christ was one such prophet. Cao-Dai is another. . . ."

The Pope put down the porcelain tea-cup upon its silver saucer. He was, I knew, a married Pope, with two daughters, a former clerk in the Government Customs Service. For though Cao-Daiism prescribed celibacy for its hierarchy, it was a reasonable religion, recognizing that if you had acquired a wife before becoming a cardinal, nothing much could be done about it.

I asked the Pope about the Messages. Was he himself a medium?

"No," he said, "I am not a medium, but I have the faculty for discovering mediums. Sometimes they are illiterate people. But in a trance, they can write. They can even write English!" The Pope tapped my knee enthusiastically and started back in his chair, his eyes popping with astonishment at the thought of it. . . . "Ah, *c'est merveilleux! C'est merveilleux!*"

And had they had any good Messages lately? I inquired. The Pope thought a minute. Well, he said, there was one from Joan of Arc. Why, yes! and another from William Shakespeare. What had Shakespeare to say? Oh, it was on the subject of the late war.

The Pope offered me the plate of biscuits.

Rice-bowl For Millions

To the south and west of Saigon lie the provinces of the Delta, a strange land, fragmented like a jig-saw by the serpentine arms of Mekong, a land of infinite spaces where you can travel for hours with not a thing at all between you and the sky and the edge of the earth. It is also a rich land, the rice-bowl for millions, the economic heart of Indo-China.

And today that heart is kept pumping by two more private armies—the Catholics in the east who fight under the watchword "*Pro Deo et Patria*," and the Buddhist Hoa-Hao's in the west who wear on their uniforms the shield of the sword, the dragon and the white lotus flower.

Take the ferry over the Mekong—it will take you half an hour at this point—and you land on

the long delta island of Bentre, a Catholic stronghold, where the peasants still sweep off their hats and bow when a French officer drives by. For Bentre is the headquarters of the *Unites Militaires de Defense du Christianisme* of Colonel Leroy, and thirty-one year old Jean Leon Leroy is France's favourite "independent." A former lieutenant in the French Army himself, the son of a small French planter and his Viet-Nameese wife, who live on a sliver of land in the maze of the delta, Leroy is in his person the embodiment of French colonial assimilationist theories. Today, from his enormous house in Bentre, the Grand Seigneur of the Eastern Delta, he commands an army of 12,000 men which, under the sign of the Sword and the Cross, has driven the Viet-Minh from many miles of rich rice lands.

Young Man With Visions

The maroon flag, the colour of Buddha, of the Hoa-Hao flies over a large and important region round the western delta town of Cantho. The Hoa-Haos—and once again the ingenious Japanese had a good deal to do with it—have gained something like 1,700,000 adherents in the twelve years that have elapsed since in the delta village of Hoa-Hao (call it Hwa-How) a sickly young man of twenty began to have visions, to make prophecies in verse, and to heal.

As the crowds grew, the French took the young man and put him in a mental hospital for observation, and it was thence that the Japanese rescued him in 1942. "The Master" at this point made a prophecy: "The Japanese," he said, "will not consume the whole of the chicken."

Today, you can pick out the Hoa-Hao villages by the little altars that stand before the doors of the houses in regular rows, like rows of small bird-tables on posts, each with its vase of flowers, its incense sticks, its pot of tea or bottle of water. In Hoa-Hao country there are altars everywhere—but they are simple altars without images or prayer-papers, for the Hoa-Haos claim to have purified Buddhism of superstitions.

In the offices there is something else—the beetling brows and intense stare of "The Master" glowering down from the walls. For the Master is no longer with his disciples—in April, 1947, he was kidnapped by the Viet-Minh, who suspected, probably rightly, that their valuable "Special Commissioner" was about to double-cross them.

I did, however, meet the General, a benevolent, gently chuckling old gentleman, who will stand in my memory as a remarkable host—he insisted on giving me turkey and champagne for

breakfast. He had a pair of handsome moustaches, to the training of which he devoted a great deal of attention. And these, when he put on his general's hat, richly entwined in braid and golden oak leaves, gave to his appearance a faint suggestion of an Oriental Foch.

Before the war, I learned, the General has been a small peasant living in a thatched hut on the banks of the Bassac. But in the anarchic postwar years, as the guerrilla chief of the Hoa-Haos, he gained such a grip on this vital area that the French thought best to sign an agreement with him.

Now he rules over his extraordinary kingdom from an imposing "General's Residence" near his old hut on the banks of the Bassac, surrounded by pictures of himself in his general's hat, framed poems of admiration composed by his officers, the glowering eyes of The Master, and the three prescribed altars—the altar to the Country, the altar to the Heavens, and the altar to the Master.

The General—his name is Tran van Soai—disposes of 10,000 soldiers in his regular army and 50,000 men in "auto-defence," Indo-China war jargon for village self-protection. But the most sensational feature of his Hoa-Hao forces is undoubtedly their famous companies of woman warriors. When I expressed a desire to see some of these, the General nodded in that absent way of his, and within ten minutes there they were on parade like some afterthought from Hollywood's latest musical-historical epic.

They wore black trousers stretching down to their ankles and black smocks and long black "Arab" head-dresses (to "hide their hair"), and they carried long pikes with flat silver blades at the top like halberds. From leather belts at their waists swung immense curving Japanese swords.

Corps De Ballet Army

You could hardly call them "Amazons," except perhaps Madame La Generale, a buxom lady in dove-grey uniform with a revolver at her ample waist—because they had that fantastic universal slenderness of Viet-Nameese women. On the whole, they were more like a corps de ballet, and certainly they drilled with a precision and verve that would not have disgraced one. After the drilling, by way of an encore, they threw in a few odd sword-dances and exhibitions of Viet-Nameese boxing. They were just ordinary village girls, said my guide, and some of them had been in the army four years. In operations they were divided into sections; there were nurses, cooks, canteen helpers. They appeared even on the field of battle itself. One company, in fact, was armed with rifles.

The dragon, the snarling tiger, the running wheel, the cross and the lotus—five more or less private armies—such are not the materials of which a nation is forged.

And yet most of their leaders are fierce and wholehearted nationalists who would wish to see nothing better than a Viet-Nam National Army in a free and independent Viet-Nam. But such an army, they believe, can only be built by Viet-Namians themselves. "An army made by the French," said the Cao-Dai General Nguyen Van Thanh, "will be like the army of Chiang Kai-shek. It will fade away when the enemy comes."

In fact, the Cao-Dai-ists did agree to raise one battalion for the National Army. But when the French took the rifles from Cao-Dai-ist auto-defence units to give to the "national" battalion, one of the best of the Cao-Dai-ist colonels, in fury and distrust, took 1,600 soldiers and left—to become yet another "independent."

And so we are back again in the vicious circle—a vicious circle that could condemn this people to years of bitterness, internal strife and futility.

One man could break the vicious circle, the only man who still commands in some measure the respect of both sides. His name is Bao-Dai, and he is the seventh in the line of Annam's Emperors. But Bao-Dai is today perhaps the greatest of all Viet-Nam's many enigmas.

NEXT WEEK: Two men of destiny—"Uncle Ho," the rebel, and Bao-Dai, the playboy king



Hoa-Hao village. Each house has its own "bird-table" altar, decorated with vases and tea-pots

Mr. Fixit knows all the answers

by **BILL STRUTTON**

Seeking old comrades, pneumatic igloos, or a doctor who's out? The brains at Finders can help

HE HAD JUST LEFT HIS CLUB, a little wild-eyed after a week of sales campaigning, planning a world trip, and conducting one of radio's most controversial sessions. He stopped the taxi by a phone box and slipped inside to ring a friend. "David? Could you do me a favour, old boy? Look, ring my wife, would you—I shan't have time to get through. Tell her I missed the four thirty and I'll be on the five fifty-four."

The man was Donald McCullough. The programme was, of course, the Brains Trust. And the incident gave birth to a new business in Britain — a telephone message-and-inquiry service which operates right round the clock and is now thriving in its fifth year. It is serving a widening circle of business men, doctors, actors, housewives and office workers, taking messages when they are out or off duty, and supplying information on anything from the regulation height for a dart-board to the closing time of the Tate Gallery. McCullough and a handful of ex-Service men, who started the service, christened it "Finders." For a guinea a year, Finders performs the duty of phone secretary, consultant sage and general Mr. Fixit.

McCullough is an athletic, streamlined fifty; he wears his iron-grey hair slicked back and punctuates his talk with an occasional nervous chortle. In spite of his well-tailored six feet two, he trots. Early in 1947, an idea which had long been simmering in McCullough's head was sufficiently stimulated by this matter of missing his train to come to the boil. Over drinks, he put it to several of his cronies. "How many times could we have used somebody to keep a tag on our whereabouts, to forward our mail and our messages and to tell our friends, when they rang, where to find us? And think of the people there must be—career girls like models, freelancers in every profession, doctors' wives, small-time carpenters—who have to camp by the phone in case they miss a call."

Office In Night Club

It was out of this meeting that the firm of Finders crystallized. They launched it in the summer of 1947, a battery of twenty telephones clustered on three army-surplus mess tables in a disused Soho night club; it resounded hollowly to the voices of its nine operators, all demobbed men. At first, Finders did not prosper. It had to cut its staff. Friends volunteered to shift-work for nothing. In these early days it was



Thornton shows actress Genine Graham, a new client, round Finders. On left is McCullough

possible for a founder-member seeking cinerarias for his window-box, or the address of the nearest Turkish bath, to dial their number and be startled by a "Can I help you?" that was bluff, familiar and celebrated. It would be Brains Trustee McCullough, pitching in. On these things and on its breezy charm, Finders survived.

The firm owes much, too, to an Australian business man, Brigadier Keith Bedwell; late in 1949, Bedwell persuaded McCullough to move from Soho to a more stately address in Wigmore Street, where he let him have a ground-floor suite of offices at an alluring rent. Finders has not looked back since then. Each year, mostly on word-of-mouth recommendations, its membership has doubled. This year membership tripled and is moving towards five figures; with this, Finders is at last out of the red.

Human Encyclopaedia

Chief operator for Finders is a former sergeant-major from the Scots Guards, William Thornton, a Bachelor of Science and now, after five years of having the oddest queries referred to him, something of a human encyclopaedia. In recent weeks Finders has sought and found, among other things, two fillets of sole for a sick housewife, heated accommodation for a Pekinese dog, a children's entertainer, the qualifications required for the Royal Ocean Flying Club, several bottles of mead, a load of rubber roofing tiles and a bust of Julius Caesar. The private subscriber's guinea covers ordinary inquiries; errands cost 2s. 6d. each; trunk calls and taxi fares involved in inquiries are charged.

A lot of the answers to members' questions, which run the gamut from the profound to the lunatic, are now ready on the lips of Finders' staff. Their offices are stacked with voluminous files, references, international phone directories, and card-index systems that list such remotely

useful data as a manufacturer of ear-clips for cows, several dog barbers, night-club prices, where to buy a pneumatic igloo, and a good recipe for queen cakes.

Visitors to Britain who join Finders at a travel office get a stack of printed visiting cards, giving Finders's telephone number, to distribute to friends, relatives and possible business contacts. For their stationery they are given stickers which say: "To contact me at any time, dial WELbeck 6655," and let any messages follow them on their travels around the country.

Actresses, notoriously elusive, list Finders as their alternative number. And housewives use the service to ask: "Where can I leave a dachshund while I call at the hospital? . . . Do you know a reliable nappy service? . . . Can you send a man to fix my broken window? . . . My son's silkworms have hatched out—what on earth do I do?"

It is a Finders rule never to laugh at a question. There was, for instance, the American voice which asked: "Say—uh, when do they change the guard at the Regent Palace?"

They are proud of their major triumphs, as in The Case of the Ginger-haired Soldier. "I want," announced a subscriber, "to find a man called Ginger, or Geoffrey. I don't know his surname, I'm afraid. I don't know where he lives. The only clue I have is the name of the firm he worked for before the war." Finders located Ginger in twenty minutes flat.

Donald McCullough has a proud chuckle for the recollection. "Finding people isn't as hard as you think. One clue can often lead straight to your man. You ask your inquirer what pubs he frequented; what was his regiment, his trade, home town, religion, politics, hobbies."

The move to Wigmore Street brought Finders a huge new clientele which now provides its basic bread-and-butter — Harley Street's

Continued on page 38

The trial

AT THE OLD BAILEY, the case of the Crown versus Victoria Lamartine was entering its second day. The case was that the girl, a French employee of the Family Hotel, Euston, had stabbed to death Major Eric Thoseby in his hotel bedroom. The motive, said the Crown, was that Thoseby—a British agent in France during the war—was the father of Victoria's dead illegitimate child, and that he had deserted her.

Victoria's case was that she did not murder Thoseby; that the father of her child was a Lieutenant Julian Wells—another British agent, who had disappeared after a Gestapo raid on the Père Chaise farmhouse in France where she lived and he had hidden—and that she had tried to contact Thoseby only because, as Wells's superior officer, he might have information for her about Wells's whereabouts.

Victoria was fighting back strongly. Already she had changed her defence lawyers—paid for by M. Sainte, owner of the hotel—and engaged the firm of Markby, Wragg and Rumbold. Nap Rumbold, son of the senior partner, was now in France, trying to reconstruct the history of the Gestapo raid in which Wells had disappeared, and also finding out what he could about the French witnesses in the case.

The chief of these witnesses was M. Sainte, the hotel owner. Sainte had come to England after the war with references signed by a lawyer, Maître Gimelet, and two farming brothers named Marquis. Nap visited the Marquis brothers' farm, and found it had changed hands; the transaction had been arranged by the lawyer, Gimelet. But when he visited Gimelet, a nervous, henpecked man, the lawyer would not talk, claimed he did not remember Sainte, and seemed terrified when Nap spoke of the farm—the Ferme des Grandes Puits.

Nap was not working entirely on his own in France. An attractive French girl he had met in London, Josephine Delboise, seemed to be shadowing him. After leaving Gimelet, he returned to his hotel to find her waiting for him, and learned that she was connected with the Sûreté, and that her interest in the case centred on one of the witnesses—a Mrs. Roper, who had been staying at the hotel on the night of the murder. Mrs. Roper was involved in gold and currency deals.

Nap was growing used to being shadowed. Soon after his arrival in France, a stranger had appeared in his hotel bedroom, and warned him to return to London. Nap wasn't so easily put off. He had a lot to do and little time to do it. The trial at the Old Bailey was not expected to continue longer than Thursday.

PART 4

Tuesday

MR. SUMMERS, the prosecuting counsel, examined the witness. "Your name is Adrian Arthur Crispin Trevor-Alwright? You were a colonel on the General List in His Majesty's Army, now retired?"

"Quite so."

"You were resident at the Family Hotel in Pearlyman Street on March 14 of this year?"

"Just so."

"Now, Colonel Alwright, I would like you to direct your attention to the evening of

Mrs. Roper told the court: "I pushed the door open. The prisoner was looking down at the body"

of Victoria Lamartine by MICHAEL GILBERT

Macrea's cross-questioning was merciless and destructive—but without hard news from Nap, in France, he could not go into attack. And Nap was in serious trouble

March 14. Tell me what you remember."

"The night that poor fellow got killed? Shocking thing. Shocking. Well, now, let me think. I had dinner at seven o'clock. I think we were only five at table that night—Mrs. Roper, the three Radletts and myself. The Radletts went out as soon as dinner was over."

"That would have been—when?"

"Oh. Just about eight—perhaps a little before."

"Thank you. What did you do next?"

"I went up to my room to see to one or two things. Came back to the lounge and settled down for the evening."

"Can you remember where you sat?" Mr. Summers moved over to the plan of the hotel on a blackboard in the well of the court.

"Yes. My usual chair, between the window and the fireplace."

"The point I had in mind is that you could see out into the hall. Could you see the reception desk and the person in it?"

"I could keep an eye on old Carnino most of the time, if that's what you're getting at," said the colonel with soldierly directness.

"Well—yes. Most of the time, you say?"

"If he moved to the back of the reception office, he went out of view. But he was there all right, I'm fairly sure of that."

"What reason have you got for saying that?"

"Well, he cantered up whenever I whistled for him—to fetch a drink, you know. That sort of thing."

"I see. Well, now, apart from Carnino, who did you see in or near the lounge that evening?"

"Are you talking about poor old Thoseby?"

"Yes. If you saw him. Just tell us who you saw."

"Of course I saw him. He had to come through the lounge to get to the dining-room."

"What time would this have been?"

"I didn't keep looking at my watch. About half an hour after I'd settled down."

"Did he look quite normal, or did he seem to you upset or nervous?"

"What had he got to be nervous about?" said the colonel reasonably. "He didn't know then that he was going to be murdered."

"Then he seemed perfectly normal?"

"Quite normal."

"When did you see him next?"

"About half an hour later, when he'd finished his meal. He came back into the lounge."

"Did he say anything?"

"I think I asked him whether he was stopping long in the hotel. He said no, just for the one night as far as he knew."

"As far as he knew—you're sure that's what he said?"

"No. I'm not sure. How can anyone be sure about a conversation with a complete stranger in a hotel lounge six months ago?"

"But you remember that it was quite a short conversation?"

"Yes. Quite a short conversation. He then settled down to read the papers and shortly after that he went out. I understood him to say he was going upstairs to his room. That was—let me see—between a quarter and half past nine."

"Was anyone else in the lounge?"

"Yes. Mrs. Roper was in the lounge with me



Nap could not escape the knife; he was diving for his life. As he fell, he felt the stab

all this time. She was there from after dinner until she went up to her room at ten o'clock."

"I see. Then what happened?"

"I must have been alone then, until I went to bed at half past ten. I ran into Mademoiselle—I mean. . . ." The gallant colonel plainly boggled at the idea of saying "the prisoner."

"You encountered the prisoner?"

"Yes. I gathered that she had just returned from her evening out. I may have said good night. I then went up to my room."

"What happened next?"

"Nothing happened next. I undressed, went to bed, and woke up the next morning."

"Your room is not in the annexe with Major Thoseby's. It is in the main corridor?"

"Yes."

"Thank you, Colonel Alwright."

THE defence counsel, Macrea, cleared his throat. "Colonel Trevor-Alwright, are you an accurate observer?"

"Am I—yes. I think I may say so. The Army teaches accurate observation."

"Then you will not object if I test your memory?"

"Certainly not."

"Particularly as at one point in my learned friend's examination you indicated that you were not quite sure, after this lapse of time, exactly what did take place."

"I said that I couldn't remember exactly what was said."

"But your recollection of who was there that night, and at approximately what time they came and went—you are quite clear on that?"

"Oh, quite. Not to a minute, you know; I didn't have my watch in my hand."

"So you told us. Might I direct your attention to a statement you made in examination. You say 'Mrs. Roper was in the lounge with me all this time'—the time actually referred to was half

past nine, when Major Thoseby left to go up to his room. You go on to say: 'She was there from after dinner until she went up to her room at ten o'clock.'"

"Quite so."

"I do not particularly refer to the early part of the evening, but that is a definite statement that Mrs. Roper was in the room with you from, let us say, nine thirty until ten o'clock?"

"Yes."

"Is that true?"

"Really, sir. I hardly know how to answer you."

"Then try answering the question."

"It is my recollection of what happened."

"Your clear recollection?"

"I suppose so."

"You said, a moment ago, that your recollection of comings and goings was clear."

"Yes. I am sure that is correct."

"I see. I just mention it, because Monsieur Sainte, in his evidence, states that Mrs. Roper went in to see him in his office for a few minutes at a quarter to ten."

"In that case—yes. Well she may have slipped out of the room for a few moments."

"I trust that you are bearing in mind," said Macrea, screwing his glass into his eye and giving the colonel a stare of concentrated loathing, "that you are giving evidence upon oath?"

"Quite so."

"Evidence upon the accuracy of which the life of the prisoner may depend?"

"Oh, quite," said the colonel, unhappily.

LATER in your evidence you state that you went to bed, undressed, and went to sleep. Can you give the court some idea of how long those—er—operations would normally take—approximately?"

"Well, about half an hour, possibly a little more."

"And you reached your room just after ten o'clock?"

"Yes."

"So that by a quarter to eleven you would not have been in bed for more than five or, at the most, ten minutes?"

"Yes."

"Your room is in the main corridor, directly over Monsieur Sainte's office," Macrea demonstrated on the plan. "And, being on the first floor, is actually closer to Major Thoseby's room than Monsieur Sainte's office?"

"Certainly not. To get from my room to Major Thoseby's room would mean going back down the stairs—"

"If you would listen to my questions we should save the court's time. I did not ask if you could reach Major Thoseby's room more quickly than Monsieur Sainte could. I stated as a mathematical fact that your room is nearer to Major Thoseby's room."

"Yes. I expect that is so."

"Do you sleep with your window shut or open?"

"Open, of course."

"Then is it not odd that shouts—screams, I should say—that were loud enough to fetch Monsieur Sainte instantly to his feet, in a more

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ILLUSTRATED BY K. J. PETTS



Winifred Hooper helps to weigh a bat in a cave at Buckfastleigh. Her husband took this picture

Groping into the world of bats

by KEITH ELLIS

A dark cave, hidden crevices, uncanny second sight—to the Hoopers, it's just the place for a lovely weekend



Close-up of a bat. All the species found in Britain are harmless. But vampires do exist

AFTER PASSING THROUGH various hands, a dead bat picked up by a farm labourer near Kingsteignton, Devon, reached thirty-five year old John Hooper, who is, by profession, a research chemist with the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company. The only thing that distinguished it from other bats of the Greater Horseshoe species was a tiny metal band on the wing marked "D.S.S. 566," which told Hooper, in his spare-time capacity as Recorder of Devon Speleological (or Caving) Society, that it was the 566th bat banded by himself, his wife Winifred or other members of the D.S.S. As other men ring birds, Hooper and his friends band bats.

Bats are found in almost every part of the world, except Iceland, the Galapagos Islands and the Sandwich Isles. Although one species occurs in the Arctic Circle, bats are commoner towards the Equator, and the tropical and sub-tropical zones support the largest types of all, the fruit-eating bats that have wing-spans up to three feet. In Great Britain, twelve species are represented.

Little is known about bats in their wild state. Though a few naturalists have studied them in captivity, no mass survey of wild bats has hitherto been undertaken in this country. Since 1947, Hooper and his friends have banded more than a thousand bats, three-quarters of

them of the Greater Horseshoe species, in the caves and quarries of Devon.

A batting weekend starts for Mr. and Mrs. Hooper when they leave their home at Ashford, Middlesex, soon after six o'clock on a Friday evening, for Buckfastleigh, Devon, where the D.S.S. has its headquarters—the top storeys of three adjacent cottages knocked into one and partitioned into sleeping quarters.

Next morning, after a breakfast cooked over a Primus stove, the batting party, consisting of the Hoopers and perhaps half a dozen other cavers, makes for the cave or quarry it has decided to cover that day. For heavy work, cavers wear one-piece boiler suits without belts ("so as to slip easily through narrow passages"), nailed boots and fibre helmets fitted with lamps. Hooper himself is fair and balding. He has twinkling eyes and slim hips, admirably adapted for squeezing round tight corners.

Fight When Captured

For catching the bats, a technique has been evolved. They are sluggish in winter. "We pick them off the walls of the caves to which they hang upside down, their wings folded about them like a cloak." In summer it's much more difficult. Swooping at the speed of a hawk through the blackness of a cave, they have to be snatched from the air in a large-sized butterfly net. "Many Greater Horseshoes struggle and bite furiously, often drawing blood." Banders going out at the end of a season find few bats still unmarked, which suggests that the bat population is steady and the banders thorough.

After a tiny aluminium band has been clipped to the fore-wing, the time, place, species and sex of each bat is recorded, together with anything interesting the bander may notice. The bat is then released. That banders are no more infallible than other human beings is suggested by one entry in Hooper's records: "Lesser Horseshoe bat. Sex: male. Note: pregnant."

Hooper's first attempt at banding bats was in September, 1947, when he, his wife and another helper stretched a rabbit net across a small opening in a barn wall and closed all the other exits. While his companions waited by the net, Hooper strolled down the barn making noises he hoped would drive the bats towards the opening. "Two-thirds of them left the barn by other crevices and the rest circled round. Of every four that hit the net, three struggled through so quickly as to be lost." Even with a wing-span of fourteen inches, some of them zipped straight through the two-inch mesh.

Bats can see, but not well. That they have some sort of second sight was proved two hundred years ago by an Italian scientist who caught a number of bats, covered their eyes with sticky tape and released them in a pitch-dark room across which he had hung thin black threads strung with tiny bells. The bats flew up and down. Not a bell rang. Somehow they had been able to avoid the threads, but how?

Carry Their Own Radar

This question was not answered until the discovery of radar, when it was found that bats uttered high-pitched squeaks and could deduce from the echo exactly what was around them. These squeaks cannot be heard by human beings, whose ears can detect only sounds with frequencies of from sixteen cycles a second to 25,000 cycles a second. (Middle C is 256 cycles a second.) Bats, however, operate on a supersonic frequency of from 25,000 to 75,000 cycles a second, sending out, when they are at rest, ten impulses every second, each lasting one two-hundredth of a second. In flight, thirty impulses a second are emitted, and when the bat approaches an obstacle it may be fifty or sixty.

The echo-sounding apparatus is amazingly complete. For instance, it might be supposed

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The girl flushed angrily at the questioning, but the inspector persisted. "Isn't it usual for ambassadors to have male secretaries?" he said

TOP SECRET

by VINCENT BROOKE CABOT

ILLUSTRATED BY JOHN PINLOTT, R.I.

Messages were leaking from the embassy. The inspector could see the job would need careful handling. So, too, would the ambassador's secretary

THE BIG CAR carrying Inspector Fluke and Sergeant Gravy, of Scotland Yard, drew up smoothly at the British Embassy. The driver carried their bags into the staff quarters in the Embassy annexe, and the two men followed him.

"A bowl of milky coffee and a roll to dip in it," the inspector said. "That's breakfast in these parts. Lord, how I hate going abroad." Quite a lot of people still said the inspector was old-fashioned. The inspector didn't bother to dispute it. At this moment, more perhaps than at any other, he felt old-fashioned and belligerent. He had slept badly on the boat.

Sitting now on the edge of the bed in the little room that had been assigned to them, looking blearily at his shoes, he said: "Sooner or later, I suppose, someone will tell us what this is all about."

A discreet knock sounded and an attaché came in. "If you are ready, Mr. Carver would like to see you."

"Mr. Carver?" the inspector asked.

"In charge of archives—that is to say, records—at the chancellery. Where the business side of the embassy is conducted."

The two detectives followed the immaculate young man along passages and down in the lift. The inspector said: "I often wish I was educated myself."

Clinton Carver was a career diplomat with beautiful hands and a voice any actor would have envied. He examined the identity cards of his two visitors and carefully read a letter the inspector handed to him across his Louis XV desk. "Of course, I needn't tell you that the essence of this little matter is discretion. You will report only to me. The fact is we have discovered that there is a leakage of information at the embassy. The contents of even top secret

dispatches are handed on. So far it is quite inexplicable."

"It still goes on in spite of every check?"

"Traps have been laid, false documents prepared and coded, our security people have shadowed every possible suspect, traced their calls and read their mail. All that." Mr. Carver fixed the inspector. "And it still goes on."

"This coding? Doesn't that bring in rather a large number of people, possible suspects?"

"The department is staffed by two highly confidential men beyond suspicion, but even they have been watched."

"A code message could be memorized."

"That was pointed out to us, so we made an experiment. I will tell you what happens in the case of communications between the embassy and the Foreign Office. The dispatch is either written by His Excellency himself in his own hand, or edited by him, then typed and coded in this building, checked, put into the bag and carried by a King's Messenger to London, without leaving his sight. In some cases it is teletyped or wired."

The inspector rubbed his chin. "Could still be memorized and passed on when whoever is selling this information goes out to his lunch or home at night."

"No. The retired officer from Scotland Yard who is in charge of security here at the embassy will explain. You would like to see him before you start your investigations?"

The young attaché took them through a string of offices to a little room overlooking a courtyard, and left them.

In a few minutes, an elderly man came in and shook the inspector by the hand. "Nice to see you, Fluke," he said. "How are things in Room 2? I've been retired nine years."

"They still go over the expense accounts with

a fine comb," the inspector said. "Tell us what's got into your hair here."

"Plenty. I'm afraid this one has got me. We've watched everything—and you can take it that means everyone and everything—but still the leak goes on. I laid on a test—"

"Just a minute—how do you know the leak goes on?"

"Our own agents in places like Belgrade get hold of our own top secret stuff from their sources there almost as soon as the F.O. gets it from us in London. It's got 'em worried at M.I."

"It would. Some of the sharpest brains in Europe, they've got there. Some of them can even detect a bad smell. And they've no idea how the leakage occurs? Photographs, micro-films?"

"Listen," the ex-detective-inspector said. "His Excellency wrote a fake dispatch in his own hand and it was typed and coded and put into the bag. A K.M. was waiting, and he took it straight off to the airport and to Whitehall. The F.O. got it that same evening at 6.17 p.m. We had it cabled back from Rome at eleven forty-three the following morning by some agent of M.I. we had asked to look out for it."

"And how did it come back to you?"

"Just as it was coded."

"Still in code. I suppose they hadn't had time to crack it. Exactly as coded, or with any misprints?"

"I'll ask," the ex-inspector said. He spoke into the phone. "Nothing to mention," he reported.

Inspector Fluke made a note. "M'm. Well, let's have whatever misprints there were, anyway."

Later, while having coffee in the little office set aside for them, Inspector Fluke asked to see the officer responsible for coding.

He was a very distinguished official, an oldish

man with snow-white hair. He told the inspector he had twenty-three years' service and shared responsibility with one colleague for all coding done at the embassy.

"Who does your typing?" the inspector asked.

"I do my own on my own machine. Of course, there are no carbons or backing sheets that could be taken and dusted to reveal what has been typed. The machine is kept in my office, locked, of course. The original is returned always by me personally to the ambassador, who places it in the safe."

"You recently saw a copy of one of your type-sheets in code returned to the embassy here from Rome. Was it photographed?"

The old man considered. Then he said: "Yes, it was a print of a document, but the document was not an exact copy of the sheet I had typed."

"You knew that for certain? How?"

"The typewriter was different and there were one or two small errors."

"Well, thank you," the inspector said. "That's helpful."

HE was questioning the French girls at the private telephone exchange, later that day, when Gregg, the ex-Scotland Yard man, found him again. "Well," Gregg said. "Any ideas yet?"

"All the ideas I get in this country are the wrong ones," Fluke replied absently, looking at the girls. "But coming back to the job, think you could get His Nibs to write another dispatch? I'd like to follow it through for myself—no offence, old chap."

"I am sure he would."

A mechanic came in with a small leather bag and began to clean the typewriter on the desk.

"Are these English or French machines?" the inspector asked.

"They're American," the mechanic replied.

"Not in the French style."

"How's that?"

"French machines have the Continental keyboard—two letters different." He dug into the machine with his brushes.

"You work here?"

"All my work is done here, but I am employed by the agents who sell these machines. They have the contract to keep all the machines used in good repair, and that's my job, monsieur."

Fluke nodded and turned away. "Now, I'd like to see the ambassador's secretary. He may have something to say."

"She," said Gregg. "I'll send her over."

An attractive, but somewhat cold-looking girl came in a few minutes later and eyed the Scotland Yard man coolly. "You wanted to see me?"

"Just a few questions," the inspector said. "Have you been here long?"

"Two years. I am an interpreter with eight languages."

"Not British?"

"Dutch. My name is Klara Van Dorp."

"You have access to His Excellency's private papers?"

An angry flush coloured the girl's cheek. "I have access to such of His Excellency's papers as he wishes me to see. There is only one key to the safe."

"I know. No offence. How did you come to be employed here? Isn't it usual for ambassadors to have male secretaries?"

"When His Excellency was in Amsterdam I was temporarily employed at the embassy there and he asked me to come here with him."

"Do you have anything to do with the typing of dispatches?"

"Some of them. Never of anything secret or in code."

"Well, this was only a formality, Miss Van Dorp. Thank you."

When she had gone, the sergeant said: "There's the one with the trained memory."

"My guess, too. I expect she's writing a book

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about it." He got up from behind the desk. "Let's find Gregg and ask him a question."

They found the ex-Scotland Yard inspector in his own office. "The embassy staff will put on a test any time you like," he said.

"Fine. I'd like to do it tonight, say about midnight. Right?" Good. That chap cleaning and adjusting the typewriters—

"Of course, we've screened him. But he only cleans the machines and supplies the ribbons and spare parts needed. No machine ever leaves this building, and all carbons are burnt by one of my men who collects them together with the waste paper from the baskets. You can forget all the clever detective stuff."

"I never knew it," Inspector Fluke told him.

That night the ambassador wrote a short dispatch and, by arrangement, handed it to his private secretary to type. The Dutch girl, unconscious of being watched in every move, typed it and took it to the code room. The code room-door was then locked, while the coder, the man they had seen earlier, did his work. Sergeant Gravy, in a cupboard in the passage, heard the click of the typewriter inside the room for the best part of an hour, then the coder came out alone, locked the door and took the envelope to the bag room. Inspector Fluke himself saw the envelope dropped into the bag and sealed. The bag was handed to the ex-brigadier, who carried it as K.M. to Whitehall by the night boat. Then the two detectives went off to the room they shared and climbed into bed.

NEXT day a message reached the code room from Rome that proved conclusively that the dispatch had leaked. "Well," Inspector Fluke admitted, "it beats me. Only four people besides you and me, Gravy. What do we do? Arrest the ambassador himself?"

"I shouldn't like to try it."

"Nor should I. We must think of something else. But what?"

Gravy blew out his cheeks. "Search me. It just looks impossible. No one left the building during the critical time, except the K.M., and he went to London."

"King's Messengers change. You wouldn't get the same man every time." The inspector sat at the desk that had been loaned him, absently glowering at the typewriter. "But the

seal was unbroken, so the K.M. is out. The coder is out. He hasn't left the building or communicated with anyone. And even if the secretary could memorize all that code—"

"She never saw the code," the sergeant reminded.

"You're right! That only leaves the ambassador. . . ." The inspector was jabbing with one finger at his machine. "I wonder which two letters are different on French machines?"

"I think the 'z' is one. I know they moved the usual 'w' key—what's wrong?"

The inspector's finger was stabbing rhythmically at the keys while his eyes followed the type closely.

"Great Scott," he said. "Take a look at this, boy. Tell me what you see."

The sergeant bent over the machine and read: *This is the sort of work this machine will do.* It was repeated endlessly line after line. "I should think you know what sort of work it does by now," he said. "What's the idea?"

"You'd be surprised!" Fluke picked up the telephone and was connected to Gregg. "I want someone to attend to my machine here," he said. "Haven't you got a fellow who does nothing else but?"

"Yes. You've seen him. He has a workshop downstairs. What's wrong with it?"

"Wants a new ribbon," the inspector said. "On second thoughts, come down with me to take a look at his workshop. One of the places I haven't seen."

THE young mechanic was working under a bright light at his bench, and he smiled at the inspector as he walked in. "Busy?" the Scotland Yard man asked.

"Here there is always something to do. There are so many machines."

"If it's anything serious, you bring the machine down here? Like that one?"

"Cleaning or adjusting, I go round and do at the desks, naturally."

"And that machine? Of course," the inspector said, "it's the coder's, isn't it? What's wrong with it?"

The mechanic stood up. "The type bar is sticking."

"I think it's got the same complaint as the one on my desk. *At the moment.*" He moved closer and drew the man away from the sharp-edged tools. "Keep an eye on this bird, Gregg, old boy. I think he's what you've been looking for. . . ."

In the little office later, the inspector was bending over the typewriter with an expert from the agency that supplied the machine.

"Ingenious, of course," the man said. "But very simple. Afterwards, all he would have to do is to slacken off two screws and adjust the tension and the machine would be perfectly normal again."

"No trace," the inspector said. "That's the clever part."

"I don't get all this," Gregg grumbled. "How did that chap manage to get hold of what had been typed on any particular machine?"

Inspector Fluke stood up. "He adjusted the mechanism that moves the ribbon on a bit every time you strike a key. Instead of the letters overlapping, he made them come out separately. When he wanted to know exactly what had been typed, he put in a new ribbon and later took it off the machine. Every letter typed would be on the ribbon and he only had to read it off."

"How on earth did you tumble to it?"

"Just noticing things," the inspector said. "You can't do it by brain power. I happened to be looking and saw my ribbon jerking along a bit, so I kept on typing and watched the ribbon as it went through."

"So he had anything he wanted, any time?"

"Neat, wasn't it? But now I suppose we'd better be getting back to London. Just when I was getting ready to use my expense account. Pity."

THE END

Alec Guinness, star of many faces

by ELKAN ALLAN

He plays so many rôles so well that nobody seems quite sure what he's really like in private life



The Duchess of Kent met Guinness while he was making *The Man in the White Suit*

THE WORLD OF THE THEATRE was agreed: May 17 was to be the biggest night in the career of Alec Guinness. He was opening as *Hamlet* and was part-producer as well. Those in the know said that the Big Three—Olivier, Richardson and Gielgud—would now have to move over to make way for a fourth bright star.

While the first-night audience assembled, the thirty-seven year old actor sat in his dressing-room. Film audiences knew his name as well as theatregoers, but few would have recognized his long, twinkle-eyed face, topped by greying, half-bald, close-cropped hair, not because it was heavily disguised, but because it was not. Every time he plays a part he alters his appearance: bouncing young Herbert Pocket of *Great Expectations*; sinister, slimy-voiced old Fagin of *Oliver Twist*; pompous Disraeli of *The Mudlark*, were all Guinness.

He fingered the little beard he had grown for his conception of Hamlet and, between sips of stout, pulled on a curly, brown wig. "Five minutes," shouted the call-girl.

The first act was lightly clapped, and everybody backstage assured everybody else that it was going all right. But as the play progressed, Guinness's reinterpretation of the Prince of Denmark and consequent alterations in what have become conventions caused muttering. By the end of the performance only the man responsible for the curtain seemed not to have

felt the hostility. While the cast stood in line, sickened by the minimum polite applause, he went on lifting it and lowering it as though the audience was cheering wildly. Then somebody booed, and even he caught on. It was a flop.

"Never mind, the party's still on," Guinness told his cast. At a cost of £400 he had arranged a celebration in a private room at the Ritz. Smiling, apparently confident, he rallied the fallen spirits of the company.

Next day's newspapers blazoned the news: "Guinness's Hamlet Booed," and the critics tore into him savagely. Guinness was comforted by his ex-actress wife, Merula, who assured him that the fashionable first-night audience resented his fresh thoughts on the play.

Turned Hollywood Down

The second-night audience was more enthusiastic. Back in his dressing-room, Guinness lashed out to a reporter: "Hamlet isn't a romantic quoter of quotes—he's a real person, and that's the way I try to play him." As for the beard, he reluctantly decided to shave it off. "But I've paved the way for future Hamlets to be bearded."

Ten days earlier than intended, the play closed. The stars in the top heavens have not had to move over—just yet. Thinking they saw a chance to take him away from Britain, Hollywood and Broadway producers sent him offers to star. He read the parts and liked them, but

turned them down. "It would have looked as though I was running away."

Hollywood had beckoned before, first in 1942, when he was a more or less unknown actor in the Royal Navy. He was waiting in New York to bring back a landing-craft which was being completed, and while hanging about for it was allowed six weeks off to play in the Broadway production of *Flare Path*. He was moderately successful, but was not sorry to go back to the sea war. The night before he was due to leave he was having dinner when the representative of a leading film company rushed up to him, crying: "Ah, there you are! We have a part in a film you simply have to play." When Guinness replied: "I'm sorry, but I'm sailing in the morning," the agent said: "Never mind about that, we'll fix it. We're having the plane ticket to the coast sent round to your hotel straight away." The ticket was there when Guinness got back to his room. He left it lying on the table as he went to his ship.

He had been known to theatregoers for years as a first-rate actor, the audience at the Old Vic once holding up *The Alchemist* with applause when he said the line: "Did you never see me play the Fool?" They had—in *King Lear*. But the cinema queues did not fully accept him until he played eight different parts in eight totally different ways in *Kind Hearts and Coronets*.

Director Robert Hamer had intended to engage eight different actors to play the various



As Disraeli in *The Mudlark*. Guinness did not rely on make-up alone. Even his walk changed



As a bank messenger in *The Lavender Hill Mob*. He added an elusive lisp and a twisted smile



As a militant suffragette in *Kind Hearts and Coronets*. He had to shave off his eyebrows



With wigs for his other rôles ready, Guinness is made up at Ealing studios by Harry Frampton as the General in *Kind Hearts and Coronets*. Guinness does his own make-up for stage work

parts of a banker, a dandy, a sporting squire, an admiral, an apoplectic general, a doddering clergyman, a young ninny and a daring suffragette. Then Hamer thought of Guinness. At first, the actor was dubious: he was afraid it would be taken as a stunt. But as the idea grew on him he agreed to have a shot at it. He built up each character in three stages, being filmed each time and studying the results over and over. First he was filmed wearing just obvious make-up and wig, as a sketchy attempt to develop character; then he did it again with the proper clothes and the voice he devised for each character; finally he went through the process again, paying special attention to the walk and gestures.

It is the last process which is the most important in his style of acting. Make-up shocks the audience with the first idea of a character, but it takes innumerable small details to sustain it. Thus his Fagin had a slight twist in the neck, his Disraeli walked with stiff and unsteady legs slightly apart, and the deceptively meek bank messenger in *The Lavender Hill Mob* had an elusive lisp and a twisted Mona Lisa-like smile.

Own Personality Lost

Guinness used to keep his friends enchanted with constant mimicking of everyone he met, but he gave this up when veteran actor Leon Quartermaine told him sternly: "You will never be a good actor while you are a good mimic," the point being that an actor must do more than copy characters, he must create new people. All Guinness creations are live persons, and he loses his own personality so completely in them that everything about him which can change—voice, expression, stance, walk and gestures—does so, while everything else, such as the shape of his nose, appears to do so. He makes himself up for his stage parts with a palette and brush, like an artist painting a picture, but his most convincing characterizations are those like Herbert Pocket, for which he used only a wig.

Often, Guinness takes a shadow of whatever

part he is playing at the moment into his private life, making it difficult for casual acquaintances to be certain they have met before. Basically he appears to be sincere and shy, with a tendency to chuckle, but it is difficult to be sure, because those who have seen his convincing characters can never escape the sensation that perhaps this charming person is yet another expert Guinness creation. Sometimes he forgets to drop a part completely, and when Princess Margaret visited the set during the making of *A Run for Your Money*, in which he wore a drooping moustache, she ignored him, although they had previously met. Pulling himself together with a start, he straightened up and spoke in his normal voice. The Princess exclaimed: "How you did take us in! I thought what a boring little man, and all the time it was you!"

Despite his air of being a modest member of some indefinite profession, he is intensely theatrical. During the war his ship was caught in a terrible storm while trying to deliver some engines to Yugoslav Partisans. Nearby, twelve ships were lost with all hands. "I had half-expected some catastrophe," he says. "The night before I was visited by the only supernatural manifestation I have ever experienced. I woke up to feel it in my cabin, and it whispered the word 'tomorrow' in my ear. It may sound absurd now, but when the storm crashed over us everyone on board felt its presence. Four of us crouched where we were on the bridge for more than twenty-four hours. The storm was getting worse, until it occurred to me to exorcise the ship. Two of the crew clasped me round the chest, while I raised my right hand, making the sign of the cross. 'In the name of Jesus Christ, leave us!' I said." That evening, twelve hours later, the ship grounded on a rocky beach. All but one of the crew was saved.

In the years before the war, Guinness had a particularly difficult time. He was employed as an office-boy by a London advertising agency, but he dreamed all the time of the stage. Perhaps he was dreaming the day he ordered a

printing block which was to be four inches square. It arrived, carried by two sweating men. Jaw dropping, he watched them lower it against his desk, and then examined the order form again. He had written 4' x 4' instead of 4" x 4". "My employers were so nice about it, there was nothing to do but leave."

Footlights shining in his eyes, he went to the Fay Compton School for an audition, a slim boy of eighteen with large, projecting ears. One of the examiners was so impressed that all she could write on her report was, "Get him, get him, get him!" He was granted free training. He lived in an attic on the 28s. a week an investment in trust brought him, and ate what extras his friends at the school could smuggle into their lunch packages from home; his greatest treat was a shilling lunch one of them stood him each week.

A Producer's Opinion

When even the twenty-eight shillings dried up he left the school and went fruitlessly searching for a job. John Gielgud listened to him, but even his introductions did not produce any parts. Despite such discouragements as one producer's shouted comment during an audition: "You haven't any — talent, get off this — stage before I throw you off!" he kept looking.

He walked out of Gielgud's dressing-room when Gielgud offered him £20 to help him along. "I just wandered about—a little light-headed, I think—until suddenly I was passing the Piccadilly Theatre. A poster announced that a play called *Queer Cargo* was opening in a fortnight. I walked in and was so full of despair that, instead of going round to the stage door, I just asked the man in the box office if they wanted an actor. By a coincidence the man there was the producer, and by an even greater coincidence, he did. I got the part of a Chinaman—at £3 a week."

Young Guinness was so enthusiastic that he shaved the front of his hair off to make himself look more Chinese. His friends say that the reason he is so bald today is that it never grew again.

Parrot Learns His Parts

From then on he was rarely out of work. He was a wolf in the play, *Noah*; one of the tigers was a red-headed girl named Merula Salaman. They were married in 1938. Now they live in a nine-roomed untidy house in Chiswick and have a ten-year-old, slightly precocious son named Matthew, a Siamese cat named Zossima (after a character in Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, which Guinness adapted for the stage) and a parrot named Percy, which learns chunks from his master's parts. "Unfortunately," says Guinness, "he has a habit of picking up undesirable noises and coming out with them endlessly. He has learned that the three pips at the end of a trunk call annoy people, so he waits till I'm on the phone and then 'pips' so you can't tell whether it's the phone or him."

Guinness has never worked harder than in the last eighteen months, going from the Broadway production of *The Cocktail Party* to *The Mudlark* to *The Lavender Hill Mob* and *Hamlet*. He finished *Lavender Hill* on Christmas Eve and went straight into *The Man in the White Suit*, which will be generally released next week. This shows him with yet another face—"sad and sensitive" the script calls it.

How much all this activity earns him is a secret; but when a newspaper estimated his earnings at £50,000 during these last busy eighteen months, he objected, saying that about half this—some £320 a week—was nearer the mark. "I'm grossly overpaid sometimes," he says. As for the future, he is only slightly abashed by *Hamlet's* failure. "I've learned a lot. Now I'm looking forward to fulfilling another ambition." And that is? Another big Shakespeare rôle—*Macbeth*. THE END

ICEBOUND

by *NIGEL SLIGH*

ILLUSTRATED BY CHAMBERLAIN

We found the girl and the man together in the ice.

They were dead. They had been dead for forty years



Waiting till the girl came closer, she pointed to the body. "He's down there," she said

IF YOU GO TO NORWAY for a fishing holiday you should never be surprised at the fish you catch. I'd been there often before, but last summer I did get a surprise—only it had nothing to do with fish.

The weather had turned unseasonably cold and I decided to give fishing a miss for a couple of days. I was wandering rather disconsolately about the hotel when a fellow guest, an Englishman called Farmer, came up to me and asked if I would be interested to go for a drive with him up to the Olaf glacier. We took a lunch basket and some beer and set off. I knew very little of Farmer beyond the fact that he was a solicitor in London in quite a big way of business. He knew that I was a G.P. in the Midlands.

The road up to the glacier was not good, but the scenery was. The sun came out as we climbed. Farmer talked very little and he gave me the impression of being curiously excited about something. We got to the foot of the glacier about noon. It was not possible to take the car any farther, so we decided, rather than lug the basket with us, to lunch before we climbed. Farmer fairly bolted his food, and when I took out a pipe and filled it slowly he jumped to his feet.

"Are you going to be long?" he demanded.

I looked up at him in some surprise. He looked a little abashed and muttered something about being restless.

"You're a younger man than I am," I remarked. "You start up. You'll want to go farther than I shall. I'll follow."

I watched him for some minutes. He went up the mountain at a tremendous pace. I should like to make it clear at once that the climb was in no sense difficult or dangerous. It really consisted in following a steep mountain path. I took it easily. The sun was on my back and quite warm.

I had gone, I suppose, about half way to the first stage when I was surprised to see Farmer, half running, half slipping down the path towards me. The shale was slippery and I wondered he did not lose his foothold.

He passed me, without pausing to speak. It was not until he was several yards below me that he called over his shoulder, "Ice-axe!"

I went up to the first stage. I turned and stared below me. From where I stood the ice spread over the side of the mountain like a tongue, fairly smooth, as if it had been poured out of a cake tin by some skilful confectioner. Above, it was quite a different story. There was an almost perpendicular wall of ice—like a waterfall iced up. Beyond that I could see nothing because of the elevation of the rock.

ALL the time I had been climbing there had been periodic reports, sharp and distinct in the stillness—sharp, staccato—like rifle shots. As I stood gazing at the ice wall there was a further series of reports, and at the summit of the ice-face a huge crack suddenly appeared. Even as I watched, it spread at lightning speed. It was for all the world as if I had gradually increased pressure on a sheet of glass which already had been cracked.

There was a deafening report, then a sullen rumble, and some of the ice began to move. It was a sluggish movement, almost imperceptible unless one could focus on some object as a marker, for the glare from the sun on the ice forbade continuous scrutiny. I heard Farmer climbing towards me, and I turned. He was panting and out of breath, the sweat streaming from his face. Besides the axe, he had brought a length of rope from the car.

"As soon as I heard the cracks," Farmer said, "I knew we were in luck."

I saw Farmer searching the glacier's face, and suddenly he caught me by the arm and pointed. I could distinguish something dark close to the surface. It looked like a log.

"The millionth chance," Farmer said.

He tied the rope round his waist and asked me

to secure the other end. I put it about me. Farmer then took a few cautious steps on to the glacier, cutting footholds with the axe. The ice was practically stationary now and Farmer made good progress. Gathering in the rope, I went almost to the lip of the glacier and stared hard at the dark object.

At that moment I knew what I was looking at: two bodies imprisoned in the ice, not far beneath the surface, perhaps eighteen inches or so. Slowly, so slowly that it made one's eyes ache to watch, the bodies were slipping down the mountain feet first.

Farmer was directly beneath the bodies now, and he began to cut into the ice at a level with his shoulder. I guessed that presently the weight of the bodies would cause them to slide into the cavity in which he worked.

Shortly before six o'clock we recovered the first of the two bodies. I passed down another length of rope to Farmer and he made it secure, and together we eased the body up over the intervening ice and laid it on the shale bordering the glacier. As I unfastened the rope I glanced with interest at the body. It was of a man of about thirty-five, in a remarkable state of preservation. He must have been dead for about forty years, judging by the cut of his clothes—rather skimpy checked knickerbockers and a brown norfolk jacket. From the unnatural position of his legs it was likely that both of them, and possibly his back as well, had been broken by his fall.

Farmer wasted no time on an examination and went back to recover the other body. We adopted the same procedure and soon had the two corpses on the bank.

The second body was a woman's, in her middle twenties, and the first thing that I noticed—and it struck me forcibly—was that her wrists were tightly bound behind her back with fishing gut. Her clothes, like his, had a period flavour about them. Her hair, which was much disarranged, was long and fair.

Her face was beautiful, perhaps a little too like a pretty illustration for modern taste, but it had charm and symmetry. From the very cursory examination which I made at the time, I was left in little doubt that her legs were also broken, which seemed to indicate that both the man and woman had fallen to their deaths from a considerable height.

THERE was one other thing I noticed about her. Near the base of her skull was a fairly extensive wound, and from the contusion I judged that it had been made by a heavy weapon, possibly the butt of a loaded stick.

Farmer unbuttoned the man's jacket. Inside the breast pocket was a tailor's label—J. W. ANSTRUTHER, 988 STRAND, LONDON, and beneath that, in ink, C. R. HARRIS. Farmer found a pocket book and in it two letters addressed to Charles Harris, Esq., at the hotel in which we were staying. They were posted in London on July 3, 1911. Four visiting cards were also engraved with his name. There was a certain amount of money—about six sovereigns and some silver, and somewhat less in Norwegian currency. From other pockets Farmer took a pipe, a pouch of tobacco, some coins, a large clasp knife and a watch which had stopped at a quarter past one. Inside the tobacco pouch, much creased, was a photograph of the woman who had lain beside him in the ice.

The search of the woman's clothing was much less revealing: a handkerchief with an initial S in one corner, a crocodile purse with three English sovereigns. On her left wrist was strapped a small watch of plain gold. The hands showed half-past two.

Farmer opened the two letters. The paper was die-stamped with the name of an hotel in Queen's Gate. I read neither letter. There seemed to be something indecent in doing so, but Farmer showed me the endings. Both were similar—"Your loving and adoring Susan." Farmer replaced the belongings and lit a pipe.

"She wrote to him from London," he

remarked, "and later came out after him."

"Did they quarrel," I asked, "and did he kill her and then throw himself down the glacier?"

"Don't forget the times at which their watches stopped," Farmer remarked.

It took us well over two hours to carry the bodies down to the car and I was extremely tired by the time we set off. We made our report at the police station where we left the bodies. It was late when we got back to the hotel and the proprietor appeared relieved to see us. We told him what had happened and he nodded his head. He followed us into the empty dining-room. "Yes, I remember Mr. Harris," he said, drawing at his huge pipe. "He stayed here for several seasons for the climbing. He was a very nice gentleman. He brought Mrs. Harris with him twice or three times—I forget."

Although I was hungry and the staff had



Farmer came down the mountain, half running, half slipping. He passed me without a word

found us something to eat, I made a poor meal.

"At the time of this disaster," the Norwegian continued, watching us eat, "another lady was also lost. She was staying at Mr. Niessen's hotel in the next valley. At the time it seemed no more than a coincidence, for the mountains are large and a whole army could disappear. I was a boy at the time," the proprietor added, "and my father running the hotel, but I remember it quite well." He paused to relight his pipe. "It was a terrible day. I went that night with one of the search parties. It was Mrs. Harris who had given the alarm. She came back, poor lady, in such distress. She had driven him up to the Olaf glacier that morning in a pony trap, waited for a while until he had climbed some way up, and then gone to the river. She returned to their rendezvous about five o'clock. She waited for an hour and then drove in desperation to the hotel. She was heartbroken, poor lady. You should have seen her distress. She must have been much devoted to Mr. Harris."

He knocked out his pipe and stood up. "It is late, gentlemen, if you will excuse me."

Farmer nodded, and we watched the man climb the shining, pine stairs. "I'm tired," Farmer said, and yawned.

"I know that you have knowledge which I haven't," I said. "I know perfectly well that I won't sleep yet. Come up to my room and I'll give you a whisky."

At first Farmer refused. "Haven't you heard of the privilege between client and solicitor?" he asked.

"Damn it all," I said. "It's nearly half a century ago, and after all I happen to be a doctor."

"It's not nearly so long ago as that," Farmer

remarked. "Mrs. Harris only died last year."

I stared at him in amazement. "Then you knew her?" I asked.

He nodded and, standing up, took my arm. "Come on," he said, "I'll come and drink your whisky."

"The triangle," Farmer said, while he drank a large whisky in my room. "So banal, so overdone, so over-written and yet so fresh. Looking at that cold frozen face of his, did Harris strike you as a man whom two women would desire? Mrs. Harris was older than her husband . . . jealous. Harris, madly in love—"

"How did you know?" I asked.

"She told me," he answered quite simply. I poured him out another whisky. "You won't get me tight," he said, and smiled. "I'll tell you a certain amount. She was dying when she told it to me. Conscience, I suppose, and you and I are the father confessors in these irreligious days. She had been suspicious for some time. Her suspicions became facts and she knew that this girl was following Harris to Norway. I won't tell you her name, as her relatives are still alive. Susan, her Christian name, you know already."

Farmer stretched his arms. "I'm deuced stiff," he said. "All that digging." He rubbed one of his arms. "Apparently Harris was jumpy as a cat all that holiday. He got letters from her. Mrs. Harris was keen on fishing and, as our host here told us, she often drove out in a pony and trap and fished. Harris climbed. She purposely left him alone as much as possible. The day Harris died, he told her he was going to make a long climb. Up the Olaf glacier. Mrs. Harris knew that there was a short cut across the glacier, higher than we went today, but that there was a dangerous crevasse. She also knew that she could take the pony-cart up a track to the pass. She did so."

Farmer sipped his whisky. "She waited. She could see Harris's progress from time to time. She herself could not be easily seen. Presently she saw the girl, working her way up from the other side of the mountains. Harris began to cross the glacier. He was in a hurry, desperately anxious to meet the girl. He was careless. He slipped and went down the crevasse."

"At half past one," I said, still smarting from Farmer's rebuke about the watches.

"Mrs. Harris then waited. This is the part which I find so revoltingly cold-blooded about her. The girl approached the edge of the glacier and Mrs. Harris made her presence known to her. She beckoned for her to come closer. 'He's down there,' she said, pointing to the crevasse. 'If you want him, you'd better climb down and get him.'"

I STARED at Farmer. He smiled wryly. "It's not very pretty, is it?" he said. "The girl said something about getting help and Mrs. Harris suggested that she had better take a look at the depth of the crevasse. The girl turned and she struck her with the butt of a heavy section of her fishing rod."

"But her wrists!" I cried.

"I never liked Mrs. Harris," Farmer said slowly. "Otherwise I wouldn't have told you this story even to satisfy your curiosity. She was cruel and most determined. She told me that the girl fell to the ground. She was unconscious. 'Then I tied her hands behind her back as tightly as I could,' she said to me."

Farmer stared at the wall directly above my head as though he could still see the scene as Mrs. Harris had made her confession. "'But why on earth did you do that?' I asked her." Farmer said very quietly, "She was dying, but her face became distorted with rage. 'Although that crevasse seemed bottomless,' Mrs. Harris said, 'I hated her so much that I wasn't going to take a single chance that she should get her hands on Charles. I hated her! I hated her! I hated her!'"

Farmer glanced at me. "Nice woman, wasn't she?"

THE END



John Hansen: as Savoy head porter, he has all the glamour of a V.I.P.



Cowboy film star Gene Autry riding his horse, The Champion, in the Savoy. Doubts that The Champion was house-trained proved correct



Page boys at the birthday party of Mary Martin's daughter, Heller

We coped with the stars—and Reds

The cowboy who rode his horse into the ballroom, the head porter who was fêted like a lord, the page boys' tea party . . . the fascinating story of life in the Savoy Hotel is continued in a fifth article by *JEAN NICOL*

DURING MY FIRST YEAR AT THE SAVOY I gradually grew acquainted with the thirty different departments and all the employees whose job was to shelter, feed and entertain the hotel's 500 guests. I knew that Carroll Gibbons and his orchestra rehearsed in the empty restaurant every Wednesday afternoon; that Thursday morning was the time for the weekly general meeting, when department managers hurried downstairs to the boardroom in spotless shirts and newly creased trousers. I knew the cathedral hush in the front hall when the tall, stooping figure of the managing director, Sir George Reeves-Smith, arrived, followed by the new director, Mr. Hugh Wontner, for the daily conference with the general manager.

While this meeting was in progress, a red light shone warningly above the door of the general manager's office opening on to the front hall. Soon, Mr. Victor, the reception manager, would be summoned to go through the day's arrivals and departures. Then Sir George would walk slowly out of the office, through the front hall

and down the stairs to the restaurant. Nothing escaped his eye—the flowers, the posters advertising the cabaret, the spotless linen and the gleaming glass and silver on the luncheon tables, the pile carpet beneath his feet. A faded bloom, a chipped glass, a darned tablecloth or a badly laid carpet meant a summons to the head of the department concerned.

Sir George's standard of perfection made no allowance for incompetence. The offender was allowed one serious mistake, and one only; after that, it might mean dismissal. Sir George was a tall, graceful man with great dignity and, for all his sternness, a man of kindness.

The most important man in the hotel after the directors is the general manager, who rules over most of the departments connected with the working of the hotel. The general manager has his own suite for his wife and family and is waited on as a guest. For this he must be on call twenty-four hours a day. He must know in minute detail the working of every department so that he can tell at a glance if a waiter's apron is wrongly tied, a chicken badly carved

or an envelope incorrectly addressed. He must keep the hotel busy and well run, the profits up and the expenses down. He must be dignified, tactful, tireless, able to greet royalty or choose an epicure's dinner. He must be respected by his staff and liked by his guests and, above all, he must please his directors.

In the front hall there are two desks; one manned by the reception manager and his two brigades of faultlessly dressed, polylingual assistants, the other occupied by the inquiry office, which is similarly manned by two brigades and a night staff.

During my years at the Savoy, the manager of the inquiry office was the incomparable Mr. Leatt. Small and neat, with beautifully kept hands, Mr. Leatt had risen from the ranks of the page boys. He never waited to be asked a question, was always there with a solicitous "May I help you, my lady?" which would have charmed a sphinx into animation. No queries went unanswered, no mail was mislaid, no message forgotten, and the row of irrepressible page boys who stay waiting to be summoned by the sharp peal of the bell and the cry of "Next page, please," sat silent with respect while Mr. Leatt was in his office. When Mr. Leatt left the Savoy to be married, his bride was one of the hotel's best clients—a rich American widow.

A Page Boy's Wage

The page boys are chosen by the inquiry office manager, who sees that they are provided with a well-fitting uniform and several pairs of white gloves—a clean pair to be worn each morning. He also keeps an eye on their haircuts, fingernails and the polish of their shoes. Like the inquiry and reception clerks, page boys work in two groups—as the service of the hotel continues for twenty-four hours a day. The first begins at eight in the morning; the second at three in the afternoon. They are paid a minimum wage, receive their meals and uniforms free, and in addition they may keep their tips. During the tourist season, a cheerful, willing page boy can earn as much as six

I'm a fish out of water!



pounds a week, and there have been occasions when parents, alarmed at the effect so much "easy money" might have on the characters of their sons, have removed them to more humdrum and less rewarding jobs.

Parks Johnson, an American radio producer, included one of the Savoy page boys, Raymond Eyans, in *Voice of the People*, a programme which was broadcast to the States from a London theatre. Permission for Raymond's appearance on the programme had been given, not without some misgivings, by the general manager, Mr. Hofflin. When Mr. Hofflin and I went along to the theatre together, we saw at once that Raymond was by far the most composed of the group of people on the stage. His turn came and he answered his questions calmly and with complete confidence.

"Tell me, Raymond," said the interviewer, "does your job as a page boy mean you go around yelling for people?"

Raymond stiffened. "What!" he exclaimed in horror. "At the Savoy!" Mr. Hofflin turned to me with a delighted smile and shortly afterwards Raymond was promoted.

Mary Martin's Charm

I remember another afternoon when a despairing voice from the inquiry office answered my telephoned request for a page to deliver a letter. "I'm sorry, Miss Nicol, we won't have a boy until after tea—they've all gone to a party."

Investigation showed that it was five-year-old Heller Halliday's birthday and she had asked all the page boys to tea. The request had at first been refused but Heller's mother, who is actress Mary Martin, had called personally at the inquiry office to charm away all objections. And, promptly at four o'clock, twelve immaculate page boys made their way towards the Halliday's river suite—the leader carrying a small Victorian bouquet of spring flowers. After the first nervous introductions and the presentation of the bouquet, white gloves were tossed aside, the birthday cake was cut, and twelve hungry boys began to enjoy themselves.

The grey-uniformed carriage attendants and porters are under the control of the head porter, Danish-born John Hansen. A vast figure of immense dignity, Hansen runs his department with the precision of a regimental sergeant major.

Like A V.I.P.

A short time ago, a gossip writer was on his way home from Denmark. "There was the most impressive man on board," he told me, "exactly like the late Lord Castle-rosse. He was seen off by the ambassador, ate with the captain, and on the train two M.P.s competed to buy him champagne. I couldn't bear it any longer and asked the waiter who he was. The waiter looked astonished. 'Don't you know, sir? He's a very important gentleman. He's the head porter of the Savoy.'"

I soon discovered that the manager of each of the thirty departments in the thriving city of the Savoy was quite rightly confident that his own department was a pivot of the hotel. Mr. Boot presided over the stocktaking as well as the printing and stationery departments, printing the daily menus, supplying the hotel stationery, the bill heads, the time sheets, and keeping account of certain stocks.

Hard-working Miss Bolwell saw

that the sheets from the hotel laundry were checked and folded in a mounting Everest of snowy linen. Mr. Shaw sat deep in the intricacies of his audit department; Mr. Beale in the bill office prepared the bills and ledger accounts; and Mr. Hore, the company's secretary, knew its innermost financial secrets.

Mr. Toye, the staff manager, Luigi, the grill-room manager, Amanda, the restaurant manager, Mrs. Pugh and her band of housekeepers, Laplanche and Alban, chefs of the restaurant and grill kitchens, Mr. Spilling, the controller of supplies, the head of the laundry and the works department, the head of the engineering and the furnishing departments, the head cloakroom attendant and many others—all were busy with their all-important affairs.

The small, over-furnished office opposite the Press Relations office was occupied by the banqueting manager, the fierce M. Zavattoni. One morning, shortly after my arrival, I was sent to see him to book the largest ballroom for a Press reception for film star Gene Autry.

"Did you tell him about the horse?" asked my boss, when I returned. I confessed that I had not. "Well, I only hope he doesn't read the evening papers—they've all written about Gene Autry arriving at the Savoy, saying he will ride his famous horse, The Champion, up the steps into the ballroom, just as Tom Mix did."

I waited uneasily. An hour later the door burst open and a scarlet face appeared above my desk. "You did not tell me there was to be horses," shouted Zavattoni. "Horses in my beautiful ballroom? No—never! I will not have horses that will dirty my floor like a paddock." In the end, the banqueting manager changed his mind, but he was right about the ballroom becoming a paddock—even Gene Autry could not be expected to house-train his horses.

Free French "Invasion"

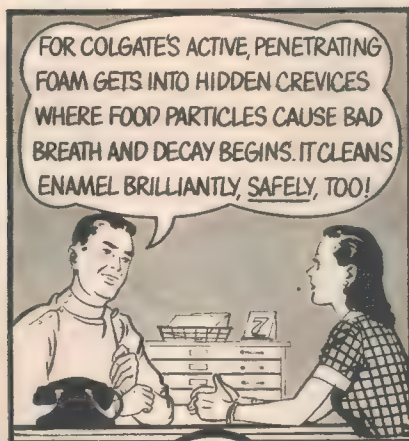
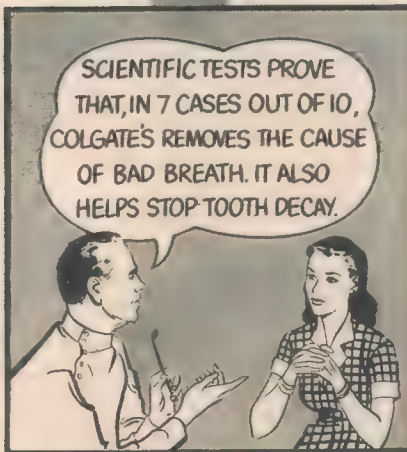
At the outbreak of war, the bookings for practically all the big banquets were cancelled. This, together with the drowning of banqueting manager M. Zavattoni in the *Arandora Star*, and the fact that there was now only one room—the Lancaster Room—available, caused for a time the almost total eclipse of the department.

The Foreign Press Association, however, under the presidency of Gottfried Keller—as glossy-headed and talkative as a well-groomed starling—continued to meet and give luncheons to a widely divergent group of honoured guests ranging from the King of Greece to the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Another organization which used the Lancaster Room for its functions was the Association des Amis des Volontaires Français—the Friends of the Free French Forces.

Their first function was a tea party, held one wintry Saturday afternoon at the beginning of 1941. Tickets were to be bought at the door and tea was laid for one thousand guests. But there were more French people in London than the Association had bargained for and more than double that number of guests crowded into the Savoy, struggling and chattering like a flock of migrating birds as they fought their way to the Lancaster Room.

For three hours the crowd ebbed and flowed, many reaching the Lancaster Room only to find that the speeches were over and it was time to go back up the stairs to the restaurant for tea. And as they surged



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back they met late remnants on their way down.

The manager was distraught. He stood by a pillar in the front hall, unheeded by the sweeping tide of humanity, and wrung his hands. "It must not happen like this again," he muttered to himself.

The day of July 14, 1942, saw well over two thousand people at General de Gaulle's "Fighting French" reception and nearly five hundred turned away. It was a touching and colourful scene.

French girls gay in the traditional costumes of the various provinces of France sold tricolour favours. I saw two sturdy officers of the French Commando Unit standing quietly by the entrance and a woman with a child in her arms stopped to touch the sleeve of one of them. It was a gesture of hope and reverence.

The Lancaster Room, panelled with mirrors and hung with vast chandeliers, has a raised stage at one end and at the other a glass fountain, each globule a crystal bead threaded on invisible wire. I stood at the back of the room and listened to the tumultuous cheers that greeted the figure of General de Gaulle.

And I remembered the equally fervent cheers of the previous summer when the First Lord of the Admiralty, A. V. Alexander, with a truculent thrust of his jaw, stood up to say: "The Germans have always been asking, 'Where is the Ark Royal?' Well, I can tell you that she has put two torpedoes into the Bismarck!" The occasion was to celebrate the recognition of E.N.S.A. by the Government, and I remember the Duke of Kent, who was acting as chairman, leaping to his feet to applaud Mr. Alexander's statement, his face boyish with unconcealed delight.

Maisky Speaks

The Lancaster Room was the scene, too, of the Anglo-Soviet Public Relations luncheon at which M. Maisky, as guest of honour, sat basking in the warmth of the speeches of Anthony Eden and Lady Violet Bonham Carter. He rose to respond, a small, inscrutable character, and said, amid cheers: "My Government would like also to base its postwar policy on the closest possible collaboration with Great Britain. It would be futile to gainsay that there are still certain difficulties in the way of this being accomplished, but with goodwill on both sides they can and should be overcome."

It was here, too, at a luncheon of the Royal College of Surgeons, that Churchill, smiling proudly, said: "I have a patient whom I have

been looking after for some years, as you know, and I am glad to be able to assure you that she is no longer in mortal danger. On that I can give you an absolute assurance."

When Wendell Wilkie made his much-publicised visit to England during the war to study conditions here, he also was honoured by a large luncheon, this one being given by the National Savings Committee. Half an hour before another luncheon that Mr. Wilkie was attending, Hansen, the head porter, rang me. "Miss Nicol," came his worried voice, "could you spare a moment?"

I hurried downstairs and saw, advancing along the courtyard towards the revolving doors, a crowd of women, some bearing placards and chanting "Ration the Rich!" The general manager arrived and ordered Hansen to station his porters outside the two entrances to prevent the women from coming in. As the doors were revolving to the arrival of guests for luncheon, together with the normal traffic of hotel visitors, this proved difficult, and many of the women slipped through into the front hall.

Once inside, in the general confusion, they seemed a little uncertain what to do. A number of them walked into the restaurant foyer, sat down grimly at the first table they could find, and refused to move. They were told that the tables were reserved, but they sat on, ignored by waiters and lunchers alike. The doors into the restaurant were then closed by the management and the other women, thus prevented from entering, sat on the stairs by the telephone boxes, clung to the rails, and tried to hang on doorhandles their posters bearing slogans of "Omelettes for the Rich—One Egg a Week for Us" and "Our Children Must Not Starve."

Pulled Porter's Hair

As it was clear beyond doubt that this was an organized political demonstration, the order was given for the women to be asked to leave and, if they refused, to be ejected. I saw Hansen trying to reason with two women who were attacking one of his porters and pulling his hair.

Several women were ultimately carried out, kicking and scratching and shouting. Most of the others, cut off in the restaurant, then got up and left. While this was going on, Wendell Wilkie slipped in through the farthest door and, with complete lack of interest, as if demonstrators in the Savoy were as commonplace as the grey-uniformed porters, entered the lift.

Most of the women, I noticed with surprise, were wearing fur coats. The most expensive looking one, in dyed squirrel, was adorned with a poster reading "Feed the Poor." I mentioned this fact to a reporter who was standing beside me.

"Oh, yes," he said. "I've just rung the Communist Party headquarters and they admitted that the demonstration had been organized by them to coincide with Wilkie's arrival here."

I walked down to see Santarelli, the restaurant manager. At the same moment, a squadron leader and three brother officers, who had been watching the disturbance in the hall, entered the restaurant and sat down at a table next to a few of the women demonstrators who had not yet left.

"Santarelli," one of the R.A.F. officers called, "food for four workers, please."

NEXT WEEK: The Savoy inventor of Woolton Pie reveals the secrets of wartime recipes



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RED FINGERS

Continued from page 7

his hooked nose had taken on a deeper hue, perhaps his eyes were more bleary than of old. He wondered whether the old man would recognize him.

"I'll have a glass of beer," he said.

Dimmy Crabb took a glass mug from the shelf behind him.

"Comes straight up from the cellar, sir, nice and cool down there. . . . He broke off suddenly, one hand poised on the handle of the beer pump. "You're not a stranger in these parts are you, sir? Seems like I seen you somewhere afore."

"I used to live here," Jundy said. "In Middle Branley."

"You did?" Dimmy peered closer. "O' course, I remember now—I never forget a face—you're the gentleman who used to stay down here for the shooting, five, six years back."

"No, I didn't," Jundy said. "I'm Jundy."

Dimmy Crabb's mouth dropped open. He set the mug of beer weakly on the counter and leaned up against the bar with both hands. "Jundy?" he gasped. "Well, I'm damned if it ain't! I—I hardly rec'nized you. Must be a mighty lot of years since you was here."

"Seventeen," Jundy said, drinking his beer.

"Well, I don't know—I just don't know. . . ." Dimmy stared at the big, well-dressed man in front of him. "Are you aiming to stay long, Mr. Jundy?"

Jundy shook his head. "Just passing by. Thought I'd like to have a look at it all again."

THERE was a pause. Dimmy gazed pointedly at Jundy's expensive clothes. He cleared his throat. "Done well, Mr. Jundy, ain't you?" "Well enough," Jundy said.

"Ah. . . ." Dimmy breathed in a tone of deep respect. He seemed suddenly at a loss for something to say. "Expect you know they don't cut clay down on the marshes no more, Mr. Jundy," he volunteered. "All the muddies've gone. You remember them, don't you?"

Jundy nodded. He remembered the muddies of Middle Branley, all right. Muddying had been the staple work of those parts in the old days—digging blue clay from pits in the marshes and filling the sailing barges that plied to and fro from Thursday Creek to the cement works up at Grindley.

"Let's see now. . . ." Dimmy's brow puckered in thought. "When exactly did you leave these parts? Seems like I remember it were round the time when young Jimmy Spiley drowned himself—or was it afore that?"

"He didn't drown himself," said Jundy. He turned abruptly away towards the window. So they still reckoned Jimmy Spiley had drowned himself. He supposed they always would.

There was the sound of hooves and wheels as a cart drew up in the patch of shade outside the pub. Came a clatter of nailed boots on the cobbles, and a big, red-faced fellow, with a thatch of black hair and a drooping lip, came into the bar.

"Afternoon, Dimmy," he said. "Pint of mild." He nodded to Jundy and mopped his face with a red handkerchief. "Whew—proper warm old day."

"Yes," said Dimmy. "It is that." He slid a foaming pot across the counter. He turned towards the big



man who stood looking out of the window. "This is Mr. Jundy," he said proudly, as one showing off a new exhibit. "He used to live in these parts. Done proper well for himself."

"Ah," said the carter, wiping froth from his mouth.

"We were just talking of old times, weren't we, Mr. Jundy?" He turned back to the carter. "We was talking about young Jimmy Spiley what drowned himself—that is," he added hastily, with a glance at Jundy, "what got drowned. You didn't know him, did you? It was before you come here. He used to live in Sebastopol Cottages down near the marsh."

"I know," said the carter. "I heard about him. Whole family of them Spileys. Something wrong with 'em, wasn't there?"

"Only with Jimmy Spiley," Dimmy Crabb said. "He had six fingers on his right hand—sort of double little finger, if you see what I mean."

"Ah," said the carter.

"All dead now though. Old man took a chill and the two older boys got blew up when that ammunition barge caught fire down in Lower Reach. Weren't half a do. Puggy Marvel were out on the wall night and day after dead 'uns—fifteen of 'em washed up. Never saw no more of the others. . . . But I was telling you about young Spiley. He wouldn't muddy like the rest of 'em. His father was a muddy, and the two older ones, except for their odd piece work, but he never took to it himself."

"Ah," said the carter.

"Never could get no decent work out of him," Dimmy went on. "Queer, he was. Used to roam round on the marshes early morning, watching the birds. Old man Spiley used to leather 'im, but it never did no good. He'd spend hours watching birds and reading books, but he wouldn't go muddying." He chuckled and slapped his hand down on the bar. "It used to make the old man so mad. Coo, I remember how he came in here one night; wild, he was; said he'd found some paper or something, I don't remember exactly what it was, but some sort of writing Jimmy had done. Something about . . . what was it?" He patted his grey pate with the palm of his hand.

"Ah, yes," he cackled. "That was it: 'Red fingers creeping across the sky.' I forget how it went on, but that was a bit of it." Dimmy gave another cackle. "Red fingers creeping across the sky."

The carter guffawed. He put his

mug down and wiped his hand across the back of his mouth.

Jundy turned to him. "What's so funny about that?"

The carter stopped sniggering and Dimmy Crabb's cackle died in his throat. "Seem to remember you thought it funny at the time," he said, with hurt respect. "Weren't it you started calling him Red Fingers?"

Jundy nodded slowly. "I didn't know him properly then—the likes of you never knew him at all." He put his hands on the bar and leaned across deliberately. "Of course he didn't go muddying. Who would, unless they wanted to spend the rest of their lives in a mud hole? I didn't go muddying, either—but nobody dared try to leather me. I got out of here, as he'd have done, if he'd lived. I've done good for myself, but he'd have done more than I've done—only he never had the chance, see? I only wish to God he was here now, I'd see he got it."

He put his hand into his breast pocket and took a cigarette from his case. He was surprised to see that his fingers were shaking slightly.

"I learnt a lot from Jimmy Spiley," he said quietly. "I was rough and wild in those days, but he taught me things I never forgot. Don't you forget it either."

He went out, leaving them staring after him.

The wheel of the car was hot on his hands as he let in the clutch and drove slowly over the top of the hill along the narrow hedgeless road that dipped down through Middle Branley on its way to the marsh. He would spend an hour in the sunshine on the sea wall, and then he would go. A pilgrimage.

At the fork he turned left towards the marshes—past Sebastopol Cottages. There were six of them. He had been born in number five; the Spileys had lived in number two. He wondered who was living there now, but he didn't pause to find out.

The road petered out into a grass track, a morass of mud in winter, but now baked hard and dry. He drove along the track across the low-lying fresh marsh, its green pastures silver laced with long, straight dykes and touched off with beds of yellowing reeds.

He left the car by the stile at the end of the lane and walked along the grass-covered bank that led to the sea wall. As he got near the dyke, he became conscious of a growing feeling of nostalgia and began to walk faster. He reached the sea wall, climbed up to the top

and stood there, letting the light south wind ruffle through his hair.

The wind came straight off the saltings, keen on his face and in his lungs. It brought a faint smell of the sea mixed with the soft, sweet smell of a salt marsh on a summer's day—something he'd almost forgotten in seventeen years.

Across the acres of creeks and saltings and mudflats that stretched out towards the estuary, cloud shadows were moving like slow, lazy shutters, so that the blue of the creeks alternated with grey and silver.

A flock of curlews—wild, restless spirits of loneliness, came calling from the distant tideway. They flew on quick wings, flaring upwards, instinctively gaining the safety of height, as they crossed the sea wall on their way to the chequered farm fields on the inland slopes.

His head turned into the wind to catch the last of their wistful crying, Jundy followed them with straining eyes until a fold of the uplands hid their flight. After a while, he sat down on the seaward side of the bank, and lit a cigarette.

The marsh slept in the haze of the warm summer afternoon. Far out, at the end of a distant creek, a figure moved, black in silhouette against the silver sea beyond. Jundy watched it until it dropped from sight behind a bank. Flounder-catching, he thought—couldn't be anything else. No clay dug on the marshes now: not since the last of the muddies had dug it years before.

HE sat smoking, thinking about the muddies. Short, broad, powerful men, broad leather belts buckled tight below their waists. Men who filled a hundred-ton barge on a tide. Six of them. Fifteen tons a man. Three pounds a week if they worked a tide a day. Good money then. . . .

Jundy smiled. A thousand recollections had come to him suddenly, evoked by the sights and sounds and smells. The squeaky voice of Puggy Marvel telling about the Lascar sailor he kept finding: "Don't git nothin' for them coloured men. I've pushed the beggar out time and agin; told 'im not to come back, the good-fer-nothin'—but 'e come in agin on every tide. Gettin' a mighty size 'e is now. Reckon it 'ont be long afore he blows himself up. . . ."

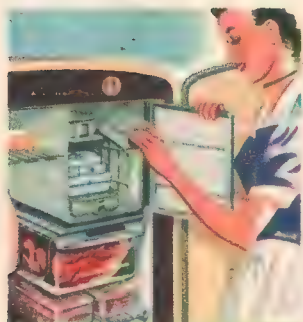
And Jimmy Spiley; the great mystery of Jimmy Spiley; the two figures Jundy had seen coming along the wall. They had turned off at the bend and settled down in the long grass by the salting's edge. The only time he'd ever seen Jimmy Spiley with a girl. He hadn't seen who she was. Jundy sighed now, thinking of it. He never did know. The next morning Jimmy was dead. . . .

Jimmy had called for him early that morning. They had reached the marsh with the first streaks of dawn and tramped out over the saltings with the last stars dimming overhead and the muddies' lamps winking from their distant cutting.

As the light grew, the marshes awakened with the living chorus of morning light, and the sun came up in a radiance of red and orange flame. He had been some little way off, looking for flounders, when he had heard Jimmy shout, and, looking up, had seen him pointing to a wounded duck in the creek.

He knew Jimmy was going to try to get it out—Jimmy had told him of what happened to wounded birds, how they died, feeble and wasted, after weeks of starving. He started to run when he saw Jimmy go through the mud and begin to wade

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MOORE WALKER

out into the creek. Jundy was still thirty yards away when Jimmy, up to his thighs, reached out for the duck—and, suddenly, stepped off into deep water. He screamed once as he went under. There was a strong tide running. He never came up again.

Jundy unlocked cramped fingers from his knees and came back to the present with a jerk—someone had just called out! He was on his feet when he saw the lone figure on the marshes climb into view from some hidden creek and stand still, staring intently into the sky.

Jundy, peering with half-closed eyes, caught a sudden flash of movement—a black dot, diving, turning swiftly. Then he saw another. A pair of hawks, soaring and diving together, attacking some small prey, too small for him to see.

The figure on the marshes remained motionless, staring upwards, following the whirling flight of the hawks as they came in over the flooding creeks towards the sea wall.

Then, Jundy saw a tiny marsh tit, fluttering, turning, flickering, like a leaf blown on a winter wind, striving vainly to gain height as the two hawks forced it farther and farther down. The three birds passed low overhead and flew on, a few feet above the ground, until they dipped from sight behind a hillock in the field. Then, suddenly, the hawks swooped up, checked, and dropped vertically downward. They stayed down.

Jundy turned back and sat down again, watching the figure approaching him. A youngster in his teens, slim, fair-haired, wearing a thin, cotton shirt, faded dungarees and a pair of old lace-up leather boots muddled to above the ankles.

THERE was something about the walk, about the set of the shoulders, that made Jundy sit forward. He watched with an unwinking stare until, within a few yards of him, at the foot of the bank, the youth stopped, breathing hard, his face almost on a level with Jundy's. His glance flickered over Jundy's well-cut clothes, and went past him towards the fields beyond.

"Two hawks come over after a marsh tit," he said. "Did they get him, sir? I saw 'em come down in the field but it was too far to see what happened."

"Yes," said Jundy. "They got him." He motioned his head to the left without taking his eyes off the face in front of him. "They drove him lower and lower and got him down in the field back there."

The youth stood with his hands in his pockets, nodding slowly.

"Ah..." he breathed. "Pity.

He'd have got away from the one, but its mate came up, and he couldn't keep height against the two of them. I shouted, but it didn't make any difference; they simply took no notice of me at all."

"I heard you," Jundy said. "I saw you. . . ." he stopped, still staring at the youth. "What's your name?" he asked.

The youth reddened slightly. "Joe," he said awkwardly. "That is—that's what they call me, Joe."

Jundy nodded. "Been flounder-catching, Joe?"

"No—just, just roamin' around."

Jundy grinned. "I used to do that, too."

Joe looked at him with quick interest. "You been out there?" He jerked his shoulder towards the salt-lings. Jundy nodded. "I've been out there a lot. Years ago, that is. Haven't been out there for a long time now. Too long, I reckon."

WITH a nervous gesture, the boy shook back a lock of fair hair that fell across his forehead. Watching him, Jundy caught his breath suddenly. He glanced at the boy's thin frame. "What do you work at, Joe?"

"I help Mrs. Jepson at the post office over at Grindley. I—I sort of live there."

"No folks, eh?"

"No, sir. My mother died when I was born."

"What about your father?"

"He died, too," the boy said shortly.

"Yes," said Jundy, "I thought so. . . . Do you like the work?"

"Not much," said Joe candidly, "cept that it gives me a chance to read books. I like reading."

Jundy sat looking at Joe, a half smile on his face. "Tell me," he said softly, "tell me, do you ever try to write poetry?"

Joe blushed. The red in his face showed up dully against his corn-coloured hair. He nodded, stammering with shy confusion. And then, for the first time, he took his right hand from his pocket to brush away the locks that fell across his eyes. Jundy, looking down, saw the curious double small finger.

Joe realized the intent look and put his hand quickly back into his pocket. "I—I ought to be going, sir," he stammered nervously.

Jundy picked up his hat from the grass beside him and got up. He slid sideways down the bank to beside Joe and put one hand affectionately on his shoulder.

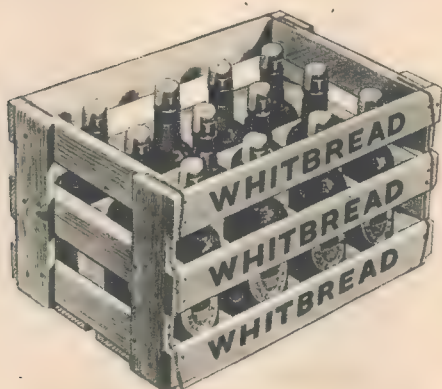
"A few things I want to say to you, Joe," he said. "Let's go along together—I've got an idea we're both going the same way." THE END

WINGS
@DAY@

SATURDAY SEP 15

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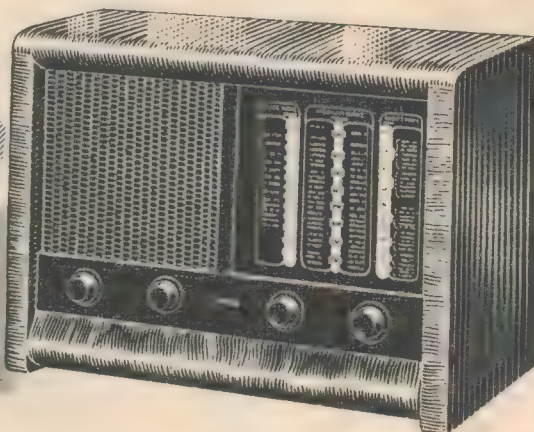
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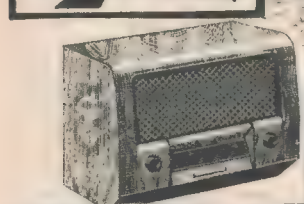
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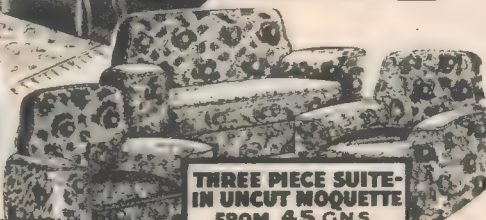
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THE TRIAL OF VICTORIA LAMARTINE

Continued from page 15

distant room with the window shut, made no impression on you, although you had only been in bed approximately five minutes?"

"I was asleep."

"Deeply asleep?"

"Yes, I sleep very soundly."

"You went to sleep at once?"

"I usually fall asleep as soon as my head touches the pillow."

"A very soldierly trait," commented Macrea. "May I revert for a moment to an earlier part of the evening. When my learned friend was pressing you to state definitely that the waiter, Carnino, was in the reception desk, you said—I am paraphrasing your answer—that when he was at the front of the desk you could actually see him, and when he was occupied at the back of the desk you were confident he was there, because he always responded to your summons. Is that right?"

"Yes. That is correct. The fellow always appeared immediately I called for him."

"And how many times did you call for him?"

"Well—perhaps half a dozen times."

"That would be six times in the period of about two hours. You are sure it was six times?"

"I couldn't swear to the precise number. It might have been six or eight."

"I see. And what did he do for you on these six or eight occasions?"

"Well—it might have been an evening paper—or a drink."

"He will be giving evidence himself and will no doubt be able to assist us. Would you say that you sent six times for a drink?"

"Perhaps."

"And what were you drinking—no doubt you will remember that?"

"Whisky."

"Six orders of whisky. Single or doubles?"

"Really, I—singles. The first may have been a double."

"Well, I expect we shall be able to ask the next witness about that, too. You did say that you were an accurate observer, Colonel?"

"I did."

Macrea appeared to refer to a note in his brief. "Is it correct that at the Kirkee Military Hospital, in 1933, you called the attention of one of the medical officers to a cobra in a bathing suit and a fez which was tobogganing down the wall beside your bed?"

"I do not remember."

"I will not press the question. It would be true, however, to say that after six or seven glasses of whisky your observation might tend to be a little less reliable than it normally would be?"

The witness made no reply to this.

Mr. Summers was speedily on his feet to re-examine the witness.

"When you were in Kirkee Hospital on the occasion to which my learned friend refers, were you suffering from malaria?"

"Yes."

"And is that a disease in which hallucinations are sometimes observed by the patient?"

"Certainly, why once in East Africa I saw—"

"Thank you," said Mr. Summers hastily.

Carnino's evidence was given to the court through an interpreter, and for this reason, and also because it tended chiefly to substantiate Colonel Alwright's, it is not offered

verbatim. The following is a short summary of the points elicited.

Carnino was on duty at the reception desk from eight o'clock until ten thirty. During this time he took four telephone calls and fetched Colonel Trevor Alwright seven single whiskies, one double whisky and an evening paper. He was quite certain that the colonel was at no time intoxicated. Had the colonel been intoxicated he would not have served him with further drinks. Cheerful, yes. At the end, possibly sleepy. But not intoxicated. He had been relieved at the desk by the prisoner on her return to the hotel at half past ten. This was the normal arrangement. He had many duties to perform before going to bed—such as setting the breakfast, preparing early morning tea trays. He went straight into the kitchen and was working there or in the dining-room for the next forty-five minutes.

He was in the kitchen at a quarter to eleven when he heard the screams. He ran through the service door and up the stairs. Monsieur Sainte was running just ahead of him. After the discovery of the body Monsieur Sainte had instructed him to telephone for the police and a doctor. In the excitement he had misunderstood and had telephoned only for the police. Afterwards he had summoned the doctor as well. He had been working with Monsieur Sainte in the hotel ever since the hotel opened.

At this point, Macrea leaned over and said something to Mr. Lovibond, his junior, who was taking this cross-examination.

"One last question. I understand that you are by birth an Italian?"

"Yes."

"Did you come to England direct from Italy?"

"No, I was in France during the whole of the war."

"In what part of France?"

"Near Angers."

Macrea leaned hastily across to Mr. Rumbold. "I only asked because I thought his Italian sounded a bit odd. The trouble is that it's such an unexpected answer that we aren't prepared to follow it up."

"I'll let Nap know at once," said Mr. Rumbold.

Mrs. Roper took the box. Mr. Summers smiled pleasantly at her. "Your name is Gwendolyn Roper? You have been a resident at the Family Hotel in Pearlyman Street, Euston—for how long?"

"For more than a year."

"You were there on the night that

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Major Thoseby was murdered?"

"Yes."

"Will you give the court an account of your movements on that evening—from dinner-time onwards?"

"I finished dinner at about eight o'clock. Colonel Alwright finished his dinner at the same time and we went into the lounge together. I was there, reading and listening to the wireless, for the better part of the next two hours. I looked in at Mr. Sainte's office for a few minutes at about a quarter to ten, but, so far as I recollect, that was the only time I went out of the room."

"Did anyone else come in during this time?"

"Yes. Major Thoseby arrived at about half past eight. He passed through the room on his way to dinner. He came out of the dining-room again at nine o'clock. The nine o'clock news, I remember, was just starting. I think he sat and read for about ten minutes—it may have been a quarter of an hour. Then he went out. I think he was going up to his room."

"What made you think that?"

"He said, 'Good night,' as he went."

"I see. That would have been about a quarter past nine, I take it. What happened next?"

"I went up to my room at ten o'clock. I had some letters to write. I thought I would write them upstairs."

"Your room is No. 33, next to Major Thoseby's?"

"Yes."

"In the ordinary way, can you hear from your room what goes on in the next-door room?"

"You cannot hear ordinary conversation. The walls are too thick for that. I was able to hear—"

"I am coming to that," said Mr. Summers smoothly. "There is just one other point first. When you entered your room could you see if there was a light on in Major Thoseby's room?"

"Yes. There was."

"What about the other two rooms on the other side of the passage? Were there people in them?"

"No. The room opposite Major Thoseby's is a bathroom. The one opposite mine is another bedroom. I don't think it was occupied that night."

"I see. Now, Mrs. Roper, what did you do next?"

"I was writing my letters and listening to the wireless. I have a portable set in my room."

"I see—and then?"

"Well—I suppose it would have

been about a quarter to eleven—I thought I heard someone go past. I turned down the wireless to listen."

"Why did you do that?"

"Well, as a matter of fact, I was afraid it might be someone else going into the bathroom, which would have been annoying, as I was just thinking about using it myself."

"I see. And then?"

"Then I heard a thud from the room next door and a scream—several screams."

"What did you do?"

"I ran out and listened. The door of Major Thoseby's room was ajar. The screaming was coming from inside. I pushed the door open and looked in. The prisoner was standing, looking down at the floor where Major Thoseby's body was lying."

"Did she say anything to you?"

"Nothing that I could understand. It was mostly screaming. I cannot exactly remember what I did next. I think I knelt to look at the body—I did not touch it. I could see that Major Thoseby was dead. Then Monsieur Sainte arrived. He told me to stay in my room until the police came."

"Thank you," said Mr. Summers.

"MRS. ROOPER," said Macrea, "I am going to start by asking you a question which I put to a previous witness. Are you an accurate observer?"

"Yes, I think so. As good as most."

"You realize how necessary it is that your evidence should be absolutely accurate?"

"I should hope so."

"Very well. You say that the walls between the two bedrooms were so thick that you could not hear conversation?"

"Normal conversation."

"Normal conversation, of course. And on this occasion you had your wireless set on?"

"I had it turned down."

"Yes, you turned it down when the footsteps came along the corridor. But not off?"

"No, not off."

"You were able to hear the footsteps in the corridor all right?"

"Yes. The corridor has no carpet."

"Quite so. But Major Thoseby's room has?"

"I—yes. I believe it has."

"And although there was this thick wall, and this carpet, and your wireless set on, you were able to hear this 'thud'?"

"Yes."

"Is that not rather remarkable?"

"I don't think so."

"I am assuming—it has not been

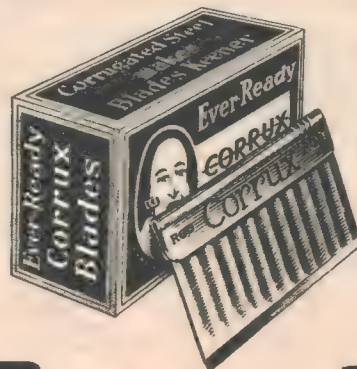


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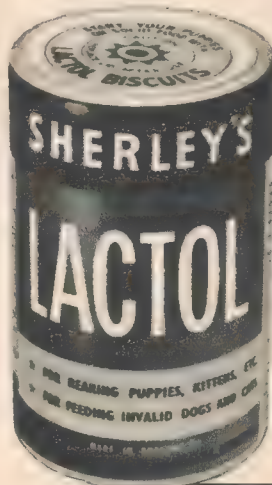
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stated—but the suggestion is that this thud was Major Thoseby falling to the floor. He was not thrown down—he collapsed. On to the carpet—while your wireless was on—with a wall between you so thick that you could not hear the human voice through. But you heard the thud quite easily?"

"Well—not easily."

"You mean you barely heard it?"

"You might say that."

"It might not have been a thud at all?"

"It was a thud."

"Then why do you say you barely heard it. Were you listening for it?"

"I—no—really. You're confusing me."

"There's a very simple remedy for confusion, Mrs. Roper, and that is to tell nothing but the truth."

"I am telling the truth."

"Very well. Now going back to those footsteps in the passage. You heard them stop outside Major Thoseby's door. And you heard the door open?"

"Yes."

"How long would it be between the opening of the door and the screams?"

"It's hard to say."

"Let me assist you." Macrea took out his watch. "The door is opening now. Tell me when the screams are due."

The silence in court was complete.

"Now," said the witness.

"Seven seconds," Macrea shut his watch with a snap. "Rather an impetuous young woman, don't you think?"

"I don't know what you mean."

"Well, there wasn't time for much conversation, was there? She must have marched straight in and stuck a knife into Major Thoseby before he had time to say so much as 'Good evening.'"

"It may have been a little longer."

"I see. It may have been a little longer. You are certain that you are not making the whole thing up?"

"No, I am telling you the truth, just as it happened."

"The court will be glad to have your assurance on the point. Let me revert to the very first question you were asked. What is your name?"

THE witness's reaction to the question was disproportionate. Mrs. Roper went first red and then white. She made no immediate attempt to answer.

"It's quite a simple question," Macrea was blandness itself. "People usually have one name at a time. Perhaps you could tell the court what your name is."

"Gwendolyn Roper."

"That is your present name?"

"Yes."

"Was it formerly Gwyneth Roper?"

"Yes."

"And before that Gwyneth Roberts?"

"Yes."

"What was your father's name?"

"I don't know." The witness gave this answer in a very low tone of voice.

"Is it correct, then, that for the first twenty years of your life you were known as Gwen Rochester—that being the name you were given in the institution where you were brought up?"

"M'lord," said Summers, "I must—"

"I presume, Mr. Macrea, that these questions are on the point of character."

"I shall make myself quite plain, I hope," said Macrea. "I am going

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both to character and credibility."

"Very well, then."

"Did you, at about the age of twenty-five—your name at that time, I believe, was Gwyneth Roberts—consort with a man called Hogan? And was this man, just before the war, sent to penal servitude for robbery with violence?"

"Yes. It was nothing to do with me."

"You were not indicted with him," agreed Macrea. "Did you, in or about 1943, under the name of Roker, associate with a Polish soldier called Pakosch—subsequently deported—and were you joined with him in these proceedings?"

"I was acquitted."

"On a technicality, yes. But is it not true that the magistrate warned you to obtain some proper employment and were you not subsequently directed, under wartime legislation, to work in a munitions factory—a direction incidentally which you neglected to comply with?"

"I—yes."

"Are you not, at the present, an associate of a man known to the police as a person who deals in illegally imported currency?"

"Certainly not."

"Then you have never met with or spoken to a Mr. Stimmy?"

"I may have done, at some time or other, I forget."

"Your memory cannot be very reliable. Were you not with him last weekend?"

"It's a lie."

"And the weekend before?"

"What's it to do with you?"

"Mrs. Roper. How do you earn your living?"

Mrs. Roper said something in a very low voice, which the judge asked her to repeat.

"I said, I've got money put by."

"I see. How much money? Roughly how much?"

"Hundreds of pounds."

"A thousand pounds? Is that about it?"

"Yes, about that."

"It must be very judiciously invested."

"I don't know what you're talking about."

"I will try to make myself slightly

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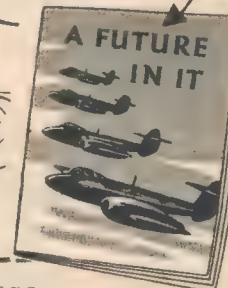
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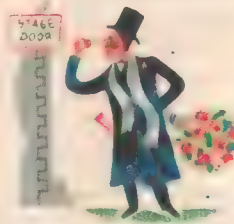
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clearer. How much does the Family Hotel charge for a week's board and lodging?"

"Six guineas a week."

"And I suppose you have other expenses?"

"Certainly."

"Would it be fair, then, to say that you spend £10 a week in all?"

"I expect that would be about it."

"In round figures that would be £500 a year—quite a good income from an investment of £1,000."

"My lord," said Mr. Summers. "I must object to this quite irrelevant inquiry into the witness's means. Is my learned friend making any financial implication—"

"I think that the implication is quite clear," said Macrea. His voice was hard and high. The reporters' pencils scurried and squeaked. "I suggest that this witness is a criminal and the associate of criminals. That she has lived since her youth by crime. That she is supported by a man known to be a professional criminal. And that her evidence is generally about as reliable as evidence from such a source might be expected to be."

"I think you must leave this to the jury, Mr. Macrea."

"I will willingly do so," Macrea sat down sharply. He was not dissatisfied with himself.

THAT morning, Nap had visited the hotel desk on his way down to breakfast and was handed a ten-page cablegram. It was from his father, and contained, in compressed form, the evidence given in court on the previous day, Monday.

He studied it while his coffee was percolating. A good deal of it was old stuff, but there were one or two names and facts which were new. He concentrated on that part of the evidence which dealt with the events of September, 1943. It occurred to him that there were some people and places that might be verified.

Accordingly, after breakfast, he caught the local train which, for a pleasant hour, crawled from station to tiny station eastward along the banks of the Loire and finally brought him to Saumur. Here he made certain inquiries, arriving back at Angers for a late lunch.

The results of his morning's work were negative, and yet not unsatisfactory. He had found, for instance, that no one seemed to have any recollection at Saumur of a Monsieur Sainte, hotel proprietor. Nor was there any hotel which could be said to correspond even roughly to the description given in evidence: "On the riverfront at Saumur, near to the main road bridge . . . it had been completely destroyed by a bomb." Saumur had suffered from bombing, it was true, but most of the damage had been done in the station area. On the south bank by the bridge there were no hotels. On the north bank there were several hotels, but none had been bombed. There was no rue du Pont.

Nap pondered these things as he filleted his *truite angevine*. He found them interesting but inconclusive. He became aware that a waiter was hovering.

"The telephone, monsieur."

"From London?"

"Yes, monsieur. The instrument is in the office. If monsieur would step this way. . . ." Nap was pleased to detect a certain note of respect. The Hotel de la Reine was plainly not used to guests who received ten-page cablegrams with their breakfast and personal telephone calls from England with their lunch.

Over the wire his father's voice

OH, JOHNNY!

by TIM



came thinly, and with intermittent clarity. "We've only just heard," it said. "We thought you ought to know. Carnino was in France for most of the war."

"Who was?"

"Carnino—the Italian waiter in the hotel. He was in the Angers district, too."

"Any address?"

"No, but an Italian shouldn't be difficult to trace. How are you getting on?"

"I'm going round in circles at the moment," said Nap frankly, "but I may have something for you soon."

Over the line he thought he heard his father sigh.

After dinner he thought he would take a walk and try to straighten out his ideas. The mid-afternoon quiet of a provincial town lay upon Angers. He strolled along the main street, past the barracks and the offices of the administration, and at the end of it he came a little unexpectedly upon the Jardin Palaeontologique et Zoologique. He pushed through the turnstile, made his way along the neatly kept path and sat down on a bench under a cedar tree in front of a cageful of spirited monkeys. He had to sort things out.

He was far from clear as to the final answer, but some of the components in the puzzle were falling into place. The person around whom the whole thing revolved was little Monsieur Gimelet, the attorney. Monsieur Gimelet had lied almost every time he opened his mouth; and behind him was Monsieur Sainte, who had lied about his residence in Saumur. And behind Sainte were the brothers Marquis who had stood surety for Monsieur Sainte when he came to England, and who had employed Monsieur Gimelet to sell their farm.

WHAT was the connecting link? What was the common factor which joined them to Major Thoseby and Lieutenant Wells; and to the grim proceedings now holding the stage at the Old Bailey?

The only possible indication which he had yet had was that it was all somehow connected with the currency racket. Mrs. Roper was the associate of a man called Stimmy who dealt in smuggled currency. And, if Madame Delboise was to be believed, he himself, immediately he had moved towards the Loire, had run into the people who managed the French end of the business.

There were a lot of questions to be

answered, but terribly little time for the answers to be found. He sat there until the sun disappeared and the chill of the autumn evening forced him to move.

Back in the hotel, he found to his annoyance that he had been called twice on the telephone. Not from England, but locally. As he was talking, the bell went again. It was a man's voice. He was calling, he said, on behalf of Madame Delboise. He regretted that he had missed Monsieur Rumbold on the previous occasions. He had some information for him. It was not of a nature to be freely discussed over the telephone.

"All right," said Nap. "Where are you?"

"115 rue de Piste. A wine merchant's shop."

"I'll be right along," said Nap.

When he had rung off he waited for a moment and then telephoned the number that Madame Delboise had given him. He recognized her voice at once. Shortly he repeated the conversation which he had just had.

"Very curious," said Madame Delboise. "It is true that I have some information for you, but so far as I am aware none of my people has telephoned you. I did not think that anyone but myself knew your number. Also, I have never heard of the—where was it?"

Nap repeated the address.

Madame Delboise asked him to hold on. In a few minutes she was back. "The message did not come from here," she said.

"All right," said Nap. "I thought that was it."

"What are you going to do?"

"I think I'd better go along and see what it's all about. We've got to cut our corners if we're going to get to the answer in time."

"All right," said Madame Delboise. "Only wait, if you please, half an hour before you set out, and I'll have a car in position watching the house. If you are asked why you did not come at once, say that you were delayed by a long-distance call from England."

"All right," said Nap.

By the time he got out into the street it was dusk—a clear autumn evening with a frosty twinkle of stars. The rue de Piste turned out to be a long road, which straggled out into the countryside northwards, and by the time he had reached No. 115 he was almost clear of the town. It was a moderate-sized house of

pink stucco, built, he guessed, since the war, shop below and house above. The shop windows were closely covered with white iron shutters and seemed to be in darkness.

Nap discovered a side door and pressed the bell. For a minute or more nothing happened, and he thought that he had not been heard. Then an outside light went on over the porch and footsteps came slowly along the hall. The door was opened by a very small, very old woman dressed in black.

"Madame Delboise asked me to come here."

"You are Monsieur Rumbold?"

"Yes."

"Follow, please," said the old woman.

She did not go back into the house as Nap had expected. Instead she threw her shawl over her head and hobbled quickly away up the alley which separated the house from its neighbour. She did not trouble to look back.

Nap had no choice but to follow her, but he could not help reflecting that if Madame Delboise's rescue party was stationed in a car down the road it was going to have to think and move fast. The alleyway they were going up was far too narrow for any wheeled vehicle.

The old woman turned to the right, went down some steps, turned left again. They had gone three or four hundred yards and were now approaching another main road, a road which presumably ran parallel with the rue de Piste.

She stopped and indicated the side door of a house, which stood ajar. It was an undistinguished sort of house, but Nap could see that there were lights in the first-floor windows.

"Monsieur will go up. He will find the door on the left."

"Thank you," said Nap.

The stairs were steep and turned twice and, being lit only by an economical blue bulb, they were not too easy to negotiate. On the landing were two doors. Nap knocked at the one which showed a light. A voice bade him enter.

IN the room were three men, and as soon as Nap was fairly inside, one of them moved across behind him and turned the key in the lock. It did not need this gesture to tell Nap that he had come to the right place. As soon as he cast eyes upon the man who seemed to be the leader of the three, he knew what he was up against.

This was a big man, thick but not heavy, strong but not clumsy. The coat cut more tightly than was absolutely necessary across the shoulders and the biceps. The hair black and well brushed. The twelve hours' beard across the cheek bones. The brown eyes expressionless.

"Sit down," said the man.

"What—" began Nap.

"And keep quiet."

At a signal, the lights were turned out. The window was opened and they all sat in the darkness and waited. A car or two went past, but none stopped. The bell rang again. No one moved. Nap heard the old woman's footsteps in the hall below and the front door opening. Steps coming lightly upstairs and a knock on the door.

The window was closed and shuttered, the light turned on again, and the door unlocked. It was the unpleasant character who had spoken to Nap in the hotel in Rouen. "He was not followed," he announced.

"Good," said the big man. "Get out the car, if you please, and we will

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go. Ramon will stay behind. Coco to come with me. You will drive." He nodded to the newcomer, who disappeared again.

It was all perfectly professional, unemphatic, almost casual, and Nap had a cold feeling that he had walked into something it was not going to be very easy to get out of.

"Where are we going?" he said. "I know nothing," said the big man. "I do what I am told. You are going to see those who will be able to talk to you."

"The chief of the smugglers," suggested Nap.

There was a tiny check in all their movements.

"If you talk again," said the man, "I will fill your mouth with sawdust and have your lips strapped with tape. It will not be comfortable."

Three minutes later they were in the car, an olive-green Citroën. The man at the wheel drove very well. Nap sat in the capacious back seat between the other two men. The car skirted Angers and turned west. They were some distance out of the town—it was difficult to judge in the dark, and at the speed they were going—but he thought they might have gone eight or ten kilometres when the big man touched the driver on the shoulder.

"Slower," he said, "and cut out your engine."

In the silence which ensued the big man sat with his eyes closed, his chin on his shoulder.

"We are being followed," he said at last, "by a car without lights. But we are near the turning now. I think they are too far away to see us."

The driver nodded. He had switched the engine on again and they were gathering speed. Ahead of them was a long straight stretch of white road, running slightly uphill. At the top a bend. As the car rounded the bend and started to run down the other side, the driver turned out all the lights. The car



barely checked, made a sharp turn to the left, and they were in a small road. The surface was poor. Then left again, the engine was cut, and the car came to a standstill.

As it did so, Nap heard the noise of two cars on the main road they had just left. They were big cars and they were going fast. They went past.

"Get moving," said the big man. "They'll come back as soon as they miss us on the next straight."

The car bumped forward, forked right, and came out into what looked like a private drive. They bucketed along for about half a mile, descending gradually. The state of the road combined with the lack of lights to reduce their speed to little more than a crawl. Nap guessed that the river lay somewhere ahead of them. The car swung off the road into a field and stopped. No one moved. For

a long minute they listened. There was no sound at all.

"All out," said the big man.

They walked together across the grass with their prisoner a pace or two in front of them. Nap's mind was obstinately blank of ideas. He realized that the big man had lied to him. He was not being taken to see anybody. That had been said to keep him quiet. He had been taken out to be killed, and killed he would be, quietly and economically, in a very few minutes.

Suddenly he saw the river. Not ten feet ahead of him, it winked under the moon, jet and silver. It ran in a great curve through the meadow which they were crossing, and Nap guessed why they had come to this precise point. The river there would be deep, with the undertow of the current on the bend.

"Stop now," said the big man. They closed up on him. Nap saw that Coco was carrying a small sack over his shoulder and from the way it swung he guessed there would be weights in it. The driver had produced a coil of insulated wire.

"Hold out your wrists," said the big man.

Nap lifted his hands as if to comply. Then, as the big man stepped forward, he jumped. He was jumping for his life and he put all his strength and agility into it. As an athlete clears a vaulting horse, with his hands ahead of him, so Nap went headfirst between the two men. He saw the blue glint of a knife coming up to meet him, but he was past and going away from the blow as it landed. A hot and stinging feeling in his side, then his hands touched a tussock of grass and he doubled up and his movement became a forward roll.

Then he was falling, and stars and moon were blotted out together as he went down into the cold, black waters of the Loire.

To be continued next week

GROPING INTO THE WORLD OF BATS

Continued from page 16

that a bat has difficulty in distinguishing between the original impulse and the echo. But for the duration of each squeak, a tiny muscle in the ear contracts so that only echoes can be heard. And, so that each bat does not confuse its own echoes with those of its neighbours—there may be 200 bats huddled together in a cluster—it has a slightly different frequency, just as human beings have different fingerprints.

Bats do no harm to anybody, least of all to the farmer. In spite of old wives' tales, they have no interest in human hair, feminine or otherwise. Vampires, however, do exist in Central and South America, and occasionally attack sleeping human beings. The Vampire settles gently, sucks hard to raise the skin, and uses its large front teeth to make an incision. Its saliva contains an ingredient that prevents clotting, so that it can lap the blood as it flows. All this is done so gently that the victim never wakes up.

Besides being harmless themselves, British bats have few natural enemies. It would be a very hungry hawk or owl that attacked such a tiny bundle of fur and membrane. A full-grown Greater Horseshoe weighs about eight-ninths of an ounce in winter and a third less in summer. Lesser Horseshoes, with a wing-span of nearly nine inches, weigh about a fifth of this.

Bats are the only mammals with the power of true flight. They suckle

their young and each July Hooper expects to find nursing colonies consisting entirely of mothers with one baby each. Though males never join a nursing colony, the mother takes good care of the baby, carrying it about with her before it can take to the air itself. Under her tail she has two false nipples which the baby bat grips in his mouth, hanging on to the fur on his mother's breast with his back legs. When she goes hunting, she parks him on the roof of the cave. "Some of the babies seem almost as big as the mothers," says Mrs. Hooper, "But they still carry them."

This capacity for carrying weights greater than themselves led one American bat enthusiast to "sell" a fantastic idea to President Roosevelt and his wartime military advisers. When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbour, the enthusiast, Dr. Lytle S. Adams, a Pennsylvania surgeon, remembered that bats could carry three times their own weight. Could they carry a small incendiary bomb over Japan?

The idea was to place the bats in canisters of 1,000 or 5,000, which would be dropped over Japan by parachute. The canisters would float down slowly and, when the doors opened at 1,000 feet, it was calculated that the bats would fly to points within a radius of twenty miles, hide in all sorts of inaccessible places, and start fires. The bombs were so fitted that the bats were able to bite them off before the fire began.

The project flourished. A dummy village was built, the bats released, and the village burned to the

ground. The secret weapon was ready. Then came calamity. Two bats escaped, each carrying its one-ounce bomb. That night the auxiliary airbase at Carlsbad, New Mexico, was gutted. After that, enthusiasm for the project waned.

Hooper's researches have the less grandiose object of piercing the general ignorance about bats. Everyone knows that bats hibernate in winter. Hooper, however, can show from his records that at least two bats have flown eleven miles from Buckfastleigh to Chudleigh between January and mid-February. The longest recorded flight for the Greater Horseshoe is seventeen miles and for the Lesser Horseshoe eight miles.

The way a bat spends its life makes it one of the most difficult creatures to study. It hides itself in nooks and crannies which are invisible to human beings. In mid-July, Hooper and a friend counted two bats in a large cave they knew well. At dusk, they stood by the entrance and counted fifty bats coming out.

The best time to find bats in caves is September to April, after which, sooner or later according to the weather, they disappear. In July the females return to the caves to have their young. Hooper does not know for how many seasons a female breeds. He does not know how long a bat lives, though he thinks it is about ten years. He cannot tell how old a bat is.

"Of one thing I am certain," says Hooper, "there are no Vampires in Britain. But Greater Horseshoes may have acquired a taste for human blood by biting us." THE END

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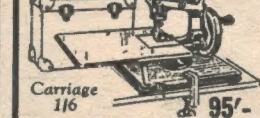
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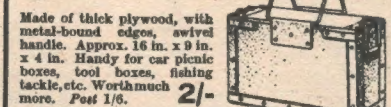
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THE PREMIER TOBACCO SUBSTITUTES. IT'S THE FLAVOUR YOU'LL LIKE. STANDARD (for Pipes and Cigarettes), (B) Tobacco-flavoured, 4 oz. 3/-; 8 oz. 5/6; 10/6. DE LUXE (C) Tobacco-flavoured pipe. (D) Rum-flavoured pipe. (E) Tobacco-flavoured Cigarette mixture 4 oz. 4/-; 8 oz. 7/6; 10/6. NOBACCA CIGARETTES, 50-3/6; 100-6/6; 500-30/-.

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CLEAN!**

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FRESH-AIR
SOFT!**

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FRESH-AIR
BRIGHT!**

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